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## Errata Corrige

In volume XXIII, 1 of *Quaderni d'italianistica*, for some strange quirk of modern technology, in the article by Robert de Lucca "A Translator's View of Gadda's Language: the '*Pasticciaccio*'", the last line of note 7 and following notes disappeared. We apologize for this omission.

e) i modi e i vocaboli astratti (4: 1090).

8 "... la sola cosa che conta (balle!) è il far di cappello a chi da da mangiare al porco; impara dunque a salutare per via la nera pelata del Mussolini e zitto lì, zitto, ché, tanto, per te, fatica e balla, per te bona Taliana, come ai tempi di Francesco, per te è il basto, non si zùfola d'altro che del basto, e non servono discorsi e argomenti dei politici seccaballe; eternamente e senza remissione tu l'hai d'avere sulle spalle, con la durezza delle traverse, il suo dannato spelamento, e nient'altro!"

<sup>9</sup>The form "talian" is found in Porta, but never "taliana".

<sup>10</sup>Another hypothesis is that "taliana" is the pronunciation of the Italy's African colonies (Abyssinia or Ethiopia), in a typical Gaddian forward allusion to Fascist history. Thanks to Emilio Manzotti for this suggestion.

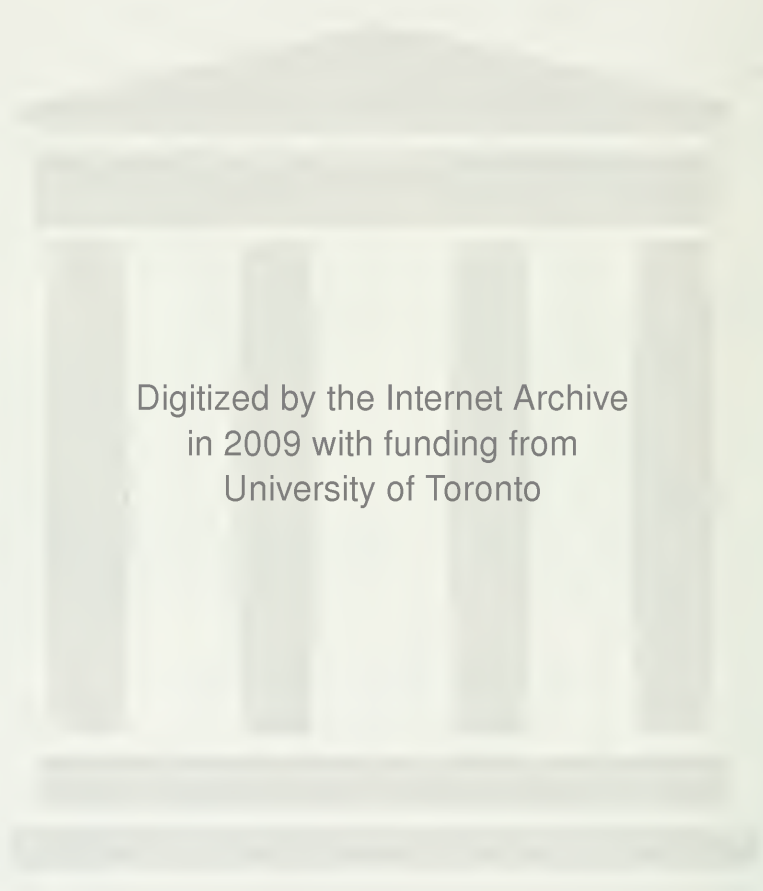
<sup>11</sup>See appendix for my own draft version of this passage.

<sup>12</sup>See Livy, *The Early History of Rome*, 1.10, and Ovid, *The Art of Love*, Book 1.

<sup>13</sup>Andrea Cortellessa's excellent bibliography of Gaddian studies for only 1993-4 covers hundreds of publications. See 159-242.

<sup>14</sup>"One was forgetting", Giulio Cattaneo writes, "that Gadda is above all a great writer in Italian and that he has not found his salvation, like Basile, in the use of Neapolitan... that the very use of Roman dialect in the *Pasticciaccio* has nothing in common with the soundtrack of a neorealist film, but is the tradition of an experience that is verbal, syntactic, plastic, imaginative, erudite and laborious, and which does not even constitute the most vigorous aspect of the book". Giulio Cattaneo, "L'affermazione di Gadda", in M. Carlino, A. Mastropasqua, F. Muzzioli, ed., *Gadda progettualità e scrittura*, (Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1987), p. 247. The original runs: "*Si dimenticava che Gadda è prima di tutto un grande scrittore in lingua e che non ha trovato la sua salvezza come Basile nel napoletano... che lo stesso romanesco del Pasticciaccio non ha nulla in comune con la colonna sonora di un film neorealista, ma è la tradizione di un'esperienza verbale, sintattica, plastica, immaginativa, dotta e laboriosa e non rappresenta nemmeno l'ingrediente più sapido del libro.*"

<sup>15</sup>Piero Gelli in his article *Sul lessico di Gadda* points out that "un'altissima percentuale dei lemmi usufruiti dallo scrittore risulta coperta dai sonetti di Belli, anche quando la parola non appare registrata dai dizionari romaneschi disponibili", but warns "Detto ciò, urge deprimere l'impressione di aver considerato il romanzo una decalcomania prosastica dell'opus belliano". See Gelli 52-77.



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GEORGE F. BUTLER

STATIUS, LUCAN, AND DANTE'S GIANTS  
VIRGIL'S LOSS OF AUTHORITY IN *INFERNO* 31

In Dante's *Commedia*, the classical poet Virgil guides the pilgrim through the lower world of the *Inferno* and helps him ascend Mount Purgatory, but part way up the mountain, Virgil's epic successor Statius escorts them, and, later, Beatrice continues to lead the wayfarer in the *Paradiso*. At the beginning of the *Inferno*, Virgil's authority goes unquestioned. "Tu se' lo mio maestro e 'l mio autore" ("You are my master and my author," *Inf.* 1.85), says the pilgrim, and Virgil is "l'altissimo poeta" ("the great poet," *Inf.* 4.80).<sup>1</sup> In the *Purgatorio*, however, Virgil confesses the limits of reason. "Quanto ragion qui vede, / dir ti poss'io," he tells the pilgrim; "da indi in là t'aspetta / pur a Beatrice, ch'è opra di fede" ("As far as reason sees here I can tell you; beyond that wait only for Beatrice, for it is a matter of faith," *Purg.* 18.46-48). Throughout the *Commedia*, Virgil, as the pagan exemplar of reason uninformed by faith, loses his authority. To illustrate Virgil's fallibility, Dante juxtaposes him against other classical poets, most notably his epic successors Statius and Lucan. While the reduction of Virgil's authority is ongoing, it is particularly interesting in *Inferno* 31, where the pilgrim and his guide prepare to enter the nethermost reaches of Hell.

Dante was well acquainted with classical literature, and the *Commedia* is an encyclopaedic culmination of his learning.<sup>2</sup> To be sure, the poem is particularly indebted to Virgil's *Aeneid*.<sup>3</sup> As Peter S. Hawkins observes, Dante's borrowings from Virgil's epic, especially in the *Inferno*, "are so abundant that it is impossible to escape the fact that the *Commedia* is constructed out of its narratives, personae, metaphors, and imperial dream."<sup>4</sup> However, Dante also admired the works of Statius and Lucan, and he refers to both poets throughout the *Convivio*. In that text he calls Lucan "quello grande poeta Lucano" ("that great poet Lucan," 4.28.13), and he praises Statius as "lo dolce poeta" ("the sweet poet," 4.25.6). The influence of Lucan and Statius on the *Commedia* is pervasive. Edward Moore calculates that Dante quotes or refers to Virgil some 200 times throughout his writings, to Lucan around 50, and to Statius between 30 and 40.<sup>5</sup> Dante was thoroughly familiar with the *Thebaid*, and Statius' city of Thebes is funda-

mental to his city of Dis.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, Dante's use of Lucan, though clear, has received only modest attention.<sup>7</sup> Lucan is among the virtuous pagans in Limbo. Virgil says to the pilgrim:

Mira colui con quella spada in mano,  
che vien dinanzi ai tre sì come sire:  
quelli è Omero poeta sovrano;  
l'altro è Orazio satiro che vene;  
Ovidio è 'l terzo, e l'ultimo Lucano.

[Note him there with sword in hand who comes before the other three as their lord. He is Homer, sovereign poet; next is Horace, satirist; Ovid comes third, and Lucan last.] (*Inf.* 4.86-90)

Dante introduces Lucan and signals that the *Pharsalia* should be compared and contrasted with the *Commedia*. On the one hand, Virgil's statement describes the chronological order of Lucan in relation to the other poets. On the other, it is an ambiguous comment on Lucan's poetic merit. Homer might be the first and best of the poets, and Lucan might fall far behind him. Or Lucan might be "l'ultimo Lucano" because he builds on and transcends the works of his predecessors much as Dante does, and Dante's poetic persona is in their midst.<sup>8</sup> When Dante writes that the transformations experienced by the thieves Cianfa and Agnello (*Inf.* 25.49-96) exceed Lucan's descriptions of the deaths of Sabellus and Nasidius (*Phars.* 9.763-97), he indicates that his poem goes beyond the *Pharsalia*. "Taccia Lucano omai" ("Let Lucan now be silent," *Inf.* 25.94), he adds, a remark which underscores the superiority of the *Commedia*.

Virgil stands in contrast to Statius and Lucan, but in different ways. In a move that has attracted considerable scholarly attention, Dante casts Statius as a pagan who secretly converted to Christianity (*Purg.* 22.88-91).<sup>9</sup> Because he is enlightened by Christian truth, Dante's Statius surpasses the poetically superior Virgil.<sup>10</sup> Statius, however, credits Virgil for both his poetic achievement and his salvation: "Per te poeta fui, per te cristiano" ("Through you I was a poet, through you a Christian," *Purg.* 22.73). Statius is what Virgil might have been, had Virgil been a Christian. Because Statius is a Christianized Virgil, he is able to guide Dante's pilgrim through Purgatory, a place where classical myth becomes increasingly eclipsed by Christian doctrine. While Statius is an evolution and extension of Virgil, Lucan is more a competitor. Like Statius, he comes after Virgil chronologically. While Virgil tells of the founding of Rome, Lucan's civil war epic is an anti-*Aeneid* about Rome's dissolution. Dante does not make Lucan a Christian. However, because he writes after Virgil and, like Dante, innovates the epic genre, Lucan poses a challenge to Virgil's authority.

The journey from Hell to Paradise is one in which Christianity displaces paganism and the vague foreshadowings of classical myth yield to the clarity of Christian truth. Because Virgil was a pagan, and because in death he is still not fully enlightened, he is not a completely reliable guide for the pilgrim. While Dante makes this point most forcefully when Statius and Beatrice guide the wayfarer, he also points to Virgil's fallibility as a guide in Hell, a realm that is fundamentally Christian in spite of its classical elements. When Virgil and the pilgrim cross Styx and approach the wall of the city of Dis, a mob of fallen angels prevents them from entering (*Inf.* 8.82-93). Virgil tells the pilgrim that the demons may not deny them access, since God has willed otherwise (*Inf.* 8.103-105). The Latin poet speaks to the demons privately but unpersuasively, and they shut the gates of Dis in his face (*Inf.* 8.112-17). Virgil announces that an angel must open the gates for them (*Inf.* 8.128-30), and the Latin poet's usual eloquence changes to nervous babbling:

“Pur a noi converrà vincer la punga,”  
cominciò el, “se non . . . Tal ne s’offerse.  
Oh quanto tarda a me ch’altri qui giunga!”

[“Yet we must win this fight,” he began, “or else . . . such did she offer herself to us! Oh, how long to me it seems till someone come!”] (*Inf.* 9.7-9)

When the angelic messenger arrives, “Venne a la porta e con una verghetta / l’aperse, che non v’ebbe alcun ritegno” (“He came to the gate, and with a little wand he opened it, and there was no resistance,” *Inf.* 9.89-90). Unlike the pagan Virgil, the angel effortlessly gains access to Dis. Virgil explains that the demons have previously tried to deny access to Hell:

Questa lor tracotanza non è nova;  
ché già l’usaro a men segreta porta,  
la qual senza serrame ancor si trova.

[This insolence of theirs is nothing new, for they showed it once at a less secret gate, which still stands without a bolt.] (*Inf.* 8.124-26)

As commentators have noted, Dante is alluding to Christ's harrowing of Hell. Virgil elsewhere reveals that he witnessed Christ's descent (*Inf.* 4.52-63, 12.34-45), and as Hawkins has discussed at length, Dante uses the motif of the harrowing of Hell to contrast Virgil and Christ.<sup>11</sup>

In describing Virgil's inability to enter Dis without divine assistance, Dante points to the limited power of the classical author. Virgil's incapacity is matched by his limited knowledge, perception, and comprehension. As he stares into Dis, he is unable to see and has trouble finding his way:

Attento si fermò com' uom ch'ascolta;  
ché l'occhio nol potea menare a lunga  
per l'aere nero e per la nebbia folta.

[He stopped attentive, like a man that listens, for his eye could not lead him far through the dark air and the dense fog.] (*Inf.* 9.4-6)

His inability to perceive his surroundings is noteworthy, since Dante's description of the area surrounding Dis strongly evokes the *Aeneid*. The walls seem to be made of iron (*Inf.* 8.78), there is a high tower (*Inf.* 9.35-36), and the three Furies appear (*Inf.* 9.37-51). In the *Aeneid*, Virgil similarly writes:

Respicit Aeneas subito et sub rupe sinistra  
moenia lata videt, triplici circumdata muro,  
quae rapidus flammis ambit torrentibus amnis,  
Tartareus Phlegethon, torquetque sonantia saxa.  
porta adversa, ingens, solidoque adamante columnae,  
vis ut nulla virum, non ipsi excindere bello  
caelicolae valeant; stat ferrea turris ad auras,  
Tisiphoneque sedens, palla succincta cruenta,  
vestibulum exsomnia servat noctesque diesque.

[Suddenly Aeneas looks back, and under a cliff on the left sees a broad castle, girt with triple wall and encircled with a rushing flood of torrent flames—Tartarean Phlegethon, that rolls along thundering rocks. In front stands the huge gate, and pillars of solid adamant, that no might of man, nay, not even the sons of heaven, may uproot in war; there stands the iron tower, soaring high, and Tisiphone, sitting girt with bloody pall, keeps sleepless watch o'er the portal night and day.] (*Aen.* 6.548-56)

Aeneas, however, never actually looks upon the torments of the damned. Instead, the Sibyl describes their punishments and explains to Aeneas:

dux inclute Teucrum,  
nulli fas casto sceleratum insistere limen;  
sed me cum lucis Hecate praefecit Avernis,  
ipsa deum poenas docuit perque omnia duxit.

[Famed chieftain of the Teucrians, no pure soul may tread the accursed threshold; but when Hecate set me over the groves of Avernus, she taught me the gods' penalties and guided me through all.] (*Aen.* 6.562-65)

The passage is significant, for Aeneas does not venture into Tartarus and Virgil does not offer a detailed account of that place in his epic. For Dante, Virgil lacks first-hand knowledge of Tartarus and is thus confused when he approaches Dis.

Rather than admit to being lost, Virgil seeks to reassure Dante's distraught pilgrim. He tells him that he thoroughly knows the way through Hell, since he has made the journey before:

Ver è ch'altra fiata qua giù fui,  
 congiurato da quella Eritón cruda  
 che richiamava l'ombre a' corpi sui.  
 Di poco era di me la carne nuda,  
 ch'ella mi fece intrar dentr' a quel muro,  
 per trarne un spirto del cerchio di Giuda.  
 Quell' è 'l più basso loco e 'l più oscuro,  
 e 'l più lontan dal ciel che tutto gira:  
 ben so 'l cammin; però ti fa sicuro.

[It is true that once before I was down here, conjured by that cruel Erichtho who was wont to call back shades into their bodies. My flesh had been but short while divested of me, when she made me enter within that wall to draw forth a spirit from the circle of Judas. That is the lowest place, and the darkest, and farthest from the heaven that encircles all. Well do I know the way, so reassure yourself.] (*Inf.* 9.22-30)

Dante creates an intertextual contest between Virgil's *Aeneid* and Lucan's *Pharsalia*, for Virgil anachronistically alludes to Erichtho, the necromantic witch of Lucan's epic. But Lucan does not tell the story of Erichtho summoning Virgil from the dead. In his note on the passage, Singleton remarks that the tale may have been suggested to Dante by various medieval legends depicting Virgil as a necromancer.<sup>12</sup> Dante's modern commentators, however, generally agree that he invented the legend.<sup>13</sup> The erroneous nature of the allusion suggests that Virgil is fabricating the tale, and that he really has not witnessed the depths of Hell before.

Lucan, however, has made that voyage, and so his text struggles against the *Aeneid* as part of the background of Dante's Hell. In the *Pharsalia*, Erichtho prepares to practice necromancy for Pompey's son and his companions. She says to them:

Si vero Stygiosque lacus ripamque sonantem  
 Ignibus ostendam, si me praebente videri  
 Eumenides possint villosaque colla colubris  
 Cerberus excutiens et vincti terga gigantes  
 Quis timor, ignavi, metuentes cernere manes?

[Even if I were to display the pools of Styx and the bank that crackles with fire—if my consent should bring before your eyes the Furies, and Cerberus shaking his mane of snakes, and the chained bodies of the Giants, why dread, ye cowards, to behold the dead who fear me?] (*Phars.* 6.662-66)



Erictho describes some of the features of the underworld, including its Stygian waters and fiery shores, horrid monsters, and shackled Giants. While she does not discuss the lower world in detail, she nonetheless displays her familiarity with it. By stressing to Pompey's son that such wonders can be made visible to them through her consent, rather than through chance, she makes clear that she has power over the infernal region. She calls Pompeius Sextus and his companions cowards for being afraid of the dead, and she indicates that the dead are afraid of her. Thus she stresses the scope of her authority. She emerges as a figure far more menacing than the Virgilian Sibyl of Cumae.<sup>14</sup> While the Sibyl will help Aeneas descend to the underworld to consult with the dead, Erictho will bring the dead out of the classical Hell and into the land of the living.

While Lucan creatively engages and opposes *Aeneid* 6 in his account of Erictho's necromancy, Statius also imitates Virgil's narrative. But unlike Lucan, Statius does not react against Virgil's text. In the *Thebaid*, the seer Manto tells her father Tiresias:

panditur Elysium chaos, et telluris opertae  
dissilit umbra capax, silvaeque et nigra patescunt  
flumina, liventes Acheron eiecat harenas.  
fumidus atra vadis Phlegethon incendia volvit,  
et Styx discretis interflua manibus obstat.  
ipsum pallentem solio circumque ministras  
funestorum operum Eumenidas Stygiaeque severos  
Lunonis thalamos et torva cubilia cerno.

[The Elysian void is flung open, the spacious shadows of the hidden region are rent, the groves and black rivers lie clear to view, and Acheron belches forth noisome mud. Smoky Phlegethon rolls down his streams of murky flame, and Styx interfluent sets a barrier to the sundered ghosts. Himself I behold, all pale upon his throne, with Furies ministering to his fell deeds about him, and the remorseless chambers and gloomy couch of Stygian Juno.] (*Theb.* 4.520-27)

Manto's vision lacks the horror of Erictho's description of the underworld, chiefly because Manto is not evil. She recounts the rivers of the classical Hell in greater detail than Lucan's Erictho, and like her counterpart from the *Pharsalia*, she mentions the Furies. But her vision is more sad than frightening, and her audience is her father, not Pompey's fearful son. In fact, the lower world is so commonplace that Tiresias asks Manto not to tell him about the punishments of Tityos, Ixion, and the other famous mythological sinners, since their sufferings are so well known (*Theb.* 4.536-40). He then adds:

ipse etiam, melior cum sanguis, opertas  
 inspexi sedes, Hecate ducente, priusquam  
 obruit ora deus totamque in pectora lucem  
 detulit.

[I myself in the years of stronger manhood beheld the hidden realms with Hecate as my guide, before heaven whelmed my vision, and drew all my light within my mind.] (*Theb.* 4.540-43)

For Tiresias, the wonders of the underworld are nothing new. He knew them fully when he was a young man, and while his daughter describes the lower world to him now, the queen of the netherworld taught him the mysteries of that region before.

The infernal descents of the *Aeneid*, the *Pharsalia*, and the *Thebaid* form the background of the descent to Hell in the *Commedia*. In *Inferno* 31, Virgil and Dante's pilgrim prepare to descend to Judecca, the lowest part of Hell. Their descent corresponds with their earlier journey to the walls of Dis, and Dante again stresses the ignorance and confusion of the travellers.<sup>15</sup> Like Virgil, who is blinded by the dark air and dense fog at the entrance to Dis, the pilgrim's vision is confounded. He initially mistakes the giants of Hell for towers, because he cannot see them clearly and is unable to differentiate them (*Inf.* 31.21-45).<sup>16</sup> And like Virgil, who babbles at the gates of Dis, much to the pilgrim's dismay (*Inf.* 9.7-15), Nimrod speaks in an unintelligible language (*Inf.* 31.67-81). While Dante describes Nimrod at length, his description primarily elucidates the giant's size. He says that Nimrod's face seems as large as the pinecone of St. Peter's; that three Frieslanders would have trouble reaching his hair; and that thirty great spans of him are visible below the place where a man buckles his cloak (*Inf.* 31.58-66). Each comparison emphasizes Nimrod's enormity, but Dante does not clearly say how large Nimrod is.<sup>17</sup>

After their meeting with Nimrod, Virgil and Dante's pilgrim encounter the giants Ephialtes and Antaeus, and Virgil tells his companion that Briareus resembles Ephialtes, though Briareus is further on and more ferocious in appearance (*Inf.* 31.103-105). Virgil additionally mentions Tityus and Typhon, thus suggesting that they are also among the giants in Hell (*Inf.* 31.124). The giants are buried from the waist down (*Inf.* 31.31-33, 44-45). Dante's Ephialtes is bound in chains (*Inf.* 31.85-90), and Virgil explains that Briareus is similarly fettered (*Inf.* 31.103-105).

The pilgrim tells Virgil that he wants to see "smisurato Briareo" ("immense Briareus," *Inf.* 31.98). As Dante's commentators have often remarked, his language recalls Statius' description of "immensus Briareus" ("Briareus vast in bulk," *Theb.* 2.596). A less frequently noted point is that Dante uses "le ritorte" to signify Ephialtes' chains (*Inf.* 31.111), a term that



evokes a passage from Statius' description of the underworld:

quid tibi monstra Erebi, Scyllas et inane furentes  
Centauros solidoque intorta adamante Gigantum  
vincula et angustam centeni Aegaeonis umbram?

[Why should I tell thee of Hell's monsters, of Scyllas and the empty rage of Centaurs, and the Giants' twisted chains of solid adamant, and the diminished shade of hundredfold Aegaeon?] (*Theb.* 4.533-35)<sup>18</sup>

These words are spoken by the seer Manto to Tiresias. In engaging this passage from the *Thebaid*, Dante creates an intertextual relationship between Statius' epic and the *Inferno*. The Italian poet hints that Statius glimpsed the truth of the giants' twisted shackles in the *Thebaid*, and the lines from the *Thebaid* work with the Christian wayfarer's Statian mention of "smisurato Briareo" (*Inf.* 31.98) to suggest the authority of Statius' non-Virgilian classical text.

The reference to "smisurato Briareo" (*Inf.* 31.98) and its evocation of Statius' "immensus Briareus" (*Theb.* 2.596) invites a comparison between the giant of *Inferno* 31 and the fierce monster of the *Thebaid*. In the corresponding passage from Statius' poem, the warrior Tydeus fights like Briareus at the battle of Phlegra:

non aliter—Geticae si fas est credere Phlegrae—  
armatum immensus Briareus stetit aethera contra,  
hinc Phoebi pharetras, hinc torvae Pallados anguis,  
inde Pelethroniam praefixa cuspide pinum  
Martis, at hinc lasso mutata Pyracmone tempens  
fulmina, cum toto nequiquam obsessus Olympo  
tot queritur cessare manus.

[Not otherwise—if Getic Phlegra be worthy credence—stood Briareus vast in bulk against embattled heaven, condemning on this hand Phoebus' quiver, on that the serpents of stern Pallas, here Mars' Pelethronian pinewood shaft, with point of iron, and yonder the thunderbolts oft changed for new by weary Pyracmon, and yet complaining, though combatted in vain by all Olympus, that so many hands were idle.] (*Theb.* 2.595-601)

Statius' Briareus is rebellious, proud, and apparently on the verge of victory, for in this passage the Latin poet does not allude to the giant's defeat. However, the beginning of the simile raises questions about the narrative that follows, since Statius says that the account is reliable "Geticae si fas est credere Phlegrae" ("if Getic Phlegra be worthy credence," *Theb.* 2.595). And as Statius and his readers would have known, Briareus was eventually defeated by Zeus and the Olympian gods.

Like Statius, Dante also questions the truth behind the mythic battle of Phlegra. Dante's pilgrim says to Virgil:

S'esser puote, io vorrei  
 che de lo smisurato Briareo  
 esperienza avesser li occhi mei.

[If it were possible, I should wish my eyes might have experience of the immense Briareus.] (*Inf.* 31.97-99)

The pilgrim begins by questioning the possibility of such an encounter. While the passage superficially means that Dante's wayfarer wants to see the monster, the poet's language suggests something stronger. The pilgrim wants to experience the monster, albeit through his own eyes, and his request shows that he wants to gain greater understanding of the classical myth. Virgil replies:

Tu vedrai Anteo  
 presso di qui che parla ed è disciolto,  
 che ne porrà nel fondo d'ogne reo.  
 Quel che tu vuo' veder, più là è molto  
 ed è legato e fatto come questo,  
 salvo che più feroce par nel volto.

[Hard by here you shall see Antaeus, who speaks and is unfettered, and he will put us down into the bottom of all guilt. He whom you wish to see is much farther on, and he is bound and fashioned like this one, except that he seems more ferocious in his look.] (*Inf.* 31.100-105)

Virgil explains that the hundred-handed monster of classical myth is really anthropomorphic. Dante's pilgrim, and the reader, must rely on Virgil's words, since the pilgrim and his guide do not actually look upon Briareus. So too, Virgil engages in a confused redirection of the pilgrim's attention. Rather than answer Dante's query about Briareus, Virgil initially mentions Antaeus. But then he contrasts Antaeus and Briareus, since he says that Antaeus is able to speak and is unchained, while Briareus is chained like Ephialtes. He further complicates his answer by saying that Briareus is not quite like Ephialtes. Instead, Briareus, according to Dante's Virgil, seems more ferocious. The pilgrim does not pursue the matter further, but Virgil's comment could fuel his eagerness to see the more ferocious Briareus, rather than diminish his interest.

While the wayfarer does not actually encounter Briareus in Hell, he later sees the giant sculpted on a paving stone in Purgatory:

Vedëa Briareo fitto dal telo  
 celestrial giacer, da l'altra parte,  
 grave a la terra per lo mortal gelo.  
 Vedeo Timbreo, vedeo Pallade e Marte,  
 armati ancora, intorno al padre loro,

mirar le membra d'i Giganti sparte.

[I saw Briareus, on the other side, pierced by the celestial bolt, lying heavy on the ground in mortal chill. I saw Thymbraeus, I saw Pallas and Mars, still armed, around their father, gazing on the scattered limbs of the giants.] (*Purg.* 12.28-33)

Dante's pilgrim learns the true fate of Briareus, as the paving stone shows the conclusion of the myth alluded to by Statius. As in the *Inferno*, Dante does not clearly reveal the physical nature of the giant. Though Briareus is shown pierced by a thunderbolt, Dante does not say how many heads and arms the giant had. He teasingly mentions the scattered limbs of the giants, but he gives no hint how many limbs there are. Indeed, the literal truth of the carving is questionable, since Thymbraeus, Pallas, and Mars stand around Jove. These are the gods of pagan polytheism and cannot be part of a literal rendering of Christian truth. Because the death of Briareus is depicted in terms of classical myth, even if Dante were to specify that the giants carved on the stone had a hundred arms, such a representation would be only a figurative representation of Christian teaching.

In *Thebaid* 4.533-35, Statius similarly reveals the outcome of the battle at Phlegra. Briareus, or Aegaeon, is a diminished shade in the underworld, and Statius links the monster with the other giants, who are bound in twisted chains of solid adamant. Thus when Dante evokes *Thebaid* 4.553-35 through his reference to Ephialtes being bound ("le ritorte," *Inf.* 31.111), he additionally associates Ephialtes with Briareus, since Statius refers to both the giants and Briareus in his corresponding passage from the *Thebaid*. In doing so, Dante reinforces Virgil's claim that Briareus is bound and fashioned like Ephialtes. When Dante describes Ephialtes, he provides little detail about the giant and instead discusses how Ephialtes is shackled (*Inf.* 31.85-96). He then says that Briareus resembles Ephialtes (*Inf.* 31.97-105).

Antaeus is closely related to Dante's Briareus. When the pilgrim asks to see Briareus, Virgil mentions Antaeus, whom he says is unfettered (*Inf.* 31.97-102). Virgil then returns to the matter of Briareus, whom he says is bound like Ephialtes (*Inf.* 31.103-105). Thus Dante contrasts Briareus and Antaeus. He then gives his extended account of Antaeus (*Inf.* 112-45). Dante links Antaeus with the battle of Phlegra. Virgil says to the giant:

O tu che ne la fortunata valle  
 che fece Scipion di gloria reda,  
 quand' Anibàl co' suoi diede le spalle,  
 recasti già mille leon per preda,  
 e che, se fossi stato a l'alta guerra  
 de' tuoi fratelli, ancor par che si creda  
 ch'avrebber vinto i figli de la terra:

mettine giù, e non ten vegna schifo,  
dove Cocito la freddura serra.

Non ci fare ire a Tizio né a Tifo.

[O you that, in the fateful valley which made Scipio heir of glory, when Hannibal with his followers turned his back, did once take for prey a thousand lions, and through whom, had you been at the high war of your brothers, it seems that some still believe the sons of earth would have conquered, set us down below—and disdain not to do so—where the cold locks up Cocytus. Do not make us go to Tityus nor to Typhon.] (*Inf.* 31.115-24)

In noting that Antaeus was absent at Phlegra and in revealing that the giants lost that battle, Dante links Antaeus with Briareus, who was at Phlegra and whose battered corpse is depicted on the pavement stone of Purgatory.

As Dante's commentators have long noted, the myth of Antaeus alluded to in *Inferno* 31 comes from Lucan's *Pharsalia*.<sup>19</sup> So too, in the *Convivio* Dante cites Lucan as one of his sources for the myth of the fight between Antaeus and Hercules (3.3.7), a myth which Virgil conveniently ignores in the *Commedia*. Lucan writes:

Nondum post genitos Tellus effeta gigantas  
Terribilem Libycis partum concepit in antris.  
Nec tam iusta fuit terrarum gloria Typhon  
Aut Tityos Briareusque ferox; caeloque pepercit,  
Quod non Phlegraeis Antaeum sustulit arvis.

[Even after the birth of the Giants Earth was not past bearing, and she conceived a fearsome offspring in the caves of Libya. She had more cause to boast of him than of Typhon or Tityos and fierce Briareus; and she dealt mercifully with the gods when she did not raise up Antaeus on the field of Phlegra.] (*Phars.* 4.593-97)

When Virgil tells Antaeus not to make him and the pilgrim seek Tityus or Typhon (*Inf.* 31.124), Dante recalls Lucan's remark that Earth had more reason to boast of Antaeus than of Typhon or Tityos. While Dante's engagement with Lucan's epic is clear, Virgil's possible allusion to the *Pharsalia* is less certain. In saying that some still believe that had Antaeus been present at Phlegra the giants would have overcome the gods (*Inf.* 31.120-21), Virgil might be alluding to Lucan as one of those believers, or he might just be recounting a more general idea. Moreover, Lucan does not actually say that the giants would have won the war with Antaeus' help; he says only that Antaeus would have made the battle more challenging. Unless Dante is again being intentionally anachronistic, Virgil would not know that he is echoing Lucan's text. And if Virgil is not intentionally alluding to Lucan, then Lucan's *Pharsalia* is part of the hidden truth of

Hell. Dante once again has Virgil engage in an intertextual struggle with Lucan, in which Virgil unknowingly affirms the truth presented in Lucan's poem.

Antaeus is linked with Briareus in the *Pharsalia*, and their relationship reinforces Dante's association of Briareus with Antaeus in the *Inferno*. Lucan refers to "Briareusque ferox" (*Phars.* 4.596). Virgil likewise tells Dante's pilgrim that compared to Ephialtes, Briareus is "più feroce par nel volto" (*Inf.* 31.105). Because Dante mentions Antaeus shortly before his reference to Briareus' ferocious appearance, he recalls Lucan, who says that Antaeus was more worthy of Earth's boasting than fierce Briareus was. So too, Virgil writes that Aeneas slays a soldier named Antaeus (*Aen.* 10.561). Virgil's reference to Antaeus in the *Aeneid* is almost immediately followed by his comparison of Aeneas to Aegaeon (Briareus) (*Aen.* 10.565-70), and thus Antaeus is further linked with Briareus. Virgil's Aeneas, who resembles Briareus in his martial rage, seems more ferocious than Antaeus, since he defeats the human soldier of that name. Thus Dante cleverly has the *Aeneid* contradict the *Pharsalia*, while the *Commedia* bears out the truth of Lucan's text.

In telling the pilgrim that Briareus is anthropomorphic, Virgil admits that his account of the hundred-handed monster in *Aeneid* 10.565-70 is a fable. But Virgil's account of Aeneas fighting like Briareus in *Aeneid* 10 is the model for Statius' account of Tydeus fighting like Briareus in *Thebaid* 2, and this is the passage that Dante invokes when the pilgrim speaks of "smisurato Briareo" (*Inf.* 31.98). Virgil's reply to the pilgrim's request to see Briareus is an attempt to crush the pilgrim's curiosity. However, since Dante never tells us what Briareus really looks like, Virgil may or may not be telling the truth when he says that Briareus is human in form. Perhaps Briareus really does have a hundred hands, since some of Dante's creatures really are grotesque: Minos has a tail (*Inf.* 5.11), Cerberus has three heads (*Inf.* 6.13-33), the Centaurs really are part man and part horse (*Inf.* 12.52-96), and Geryon has the face of a just man and the trunk of a snake (*Inf.* 17.1-27). In dismissing the pilgrim's request to see Briareus, Virgil also dismisses Statius, whose language the pilgrim echoes.

In the *Inferno*, Virgil creates a text for Dante's pilgrim. That text draws upon and engages the *Aeneid*, the *Thebaid*, and the *Pharsalia*. In telling the pilgrim that Briareus is bound and fashioned like Ephialtes, Virgil composes a new text which corrects his account of the hundred-handed monster of *Aeneid* 10. In responding impatiently to the pilgrim's request to see the Statian "smisurato Briareo" / "immensus Briareus" who, like Ephialtes, is presumably fettered by the Statian "le ritorte" / "intorta vincula," Virgil



similarly confronts the epic of his allegedly Christian poetic successor and summarily dismisses it. In alluding to Erichtho and saying to Antaeus that some believed that the giants would have defeated the gods at Phlegra had Antaeus been present there, Virgil expands upon Lucan's later epic and subtly criticizes it. But because Dante makes clear that Virgil is neither omniscient nor infallible, Virgil's responses to the *Aeneid*, *Thebaid*, and *Pharsalia* are unreliable. Dante has Virgil engage in an intertextual contest with Statius and Lucan to undermine Virgil's authority. Because Dante presents Statius as a Christian, he suggests that at times the *Thebaid* may convey truth more accurately than the *Aeneid*. Thus whenever Virgil contradicts the mythic vision of Statius, he leaves himself open to doubt. Virgil's relation to the pagan poet Lucan, however, is more complex. Though Lucan may rank behind Virgil as a poet, as Dante's reference to "l'ultimo Lucano" implies (*Inf.* 4.90), Virgil's fellow denizen of Limbo is sometimes more reliable than the author of the *Aeneid*. By comparing the poet of the *Aeneid* to the poet of the anti-*Aeneid*, Dante underscores Virgil's fallibility. Like the pilgrim, we cannot see clearly into the recesses of Hell, even with Virgil as our guide. While Dante calls into question the classical foreshadowings of Christian teaching, he also cautions against the uncritical acceptance of mortal corrections of the ancient texts. In doing so, he underscores the limits of human attempts to understand divine truth.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Dante's *Commedia* is cited parenthetically from Singleton's edition.

<sup>2</sup>See Barański, *Dante e i segni*, for an overview of Dante's intellectual development.

<sup>3</sup>Scholarship on Dante's use of Virgil is extensive. Some recent studies include Consoli, *Significato del Virgilio dantesco*; Guardini, "La figura di Virgilio nella *Commedia*"; Hollander, *Il Virgilio dantesco* and "Le opere di Virgilio"; Shapiro, "Virgilian Representation in Dante."

<sup>4</sup>Hawkins, "For the Record," 75. On the other hand, Burrow remarks that Dante shows little interest in imitating Virgil's narrative structure and compact style ("Virgils, from Dante to Milton," 82).

<sup>5</sup>Moore, *Studies in Dante*, 4. For a brief discussion of Dante and the classical canon, see Picone, "Dante and the Classics."

<sup>6</sup>Lewis, "Dante's Statius"; Martinez, "Dante, Statius and the Earthly City"; Stephany, "Statius."

<sup>7</sup>Schnapp, "Lucanian Estimations." For more on Dante's use of Lucan, see Paratore, *Dante e Lucano*.

<sup>8</sup>De Angelis, V. ". . . E l'ultimo Lucano."

<sup>9</sup>For discussions of Dante's presentation of Statius as a Christian, see P  zard, "Rencontres de Dante et de Stace"; Brugnoli, "Statius Christianus" and "Stazio in Dante"; Franke, "Resurrected Tradition and Revealed Truth: Dante's Statius"; Renucci, *Dante, Disciple et Juge du Monde Gr  co-Latin*, 334; Scrivano, "Stazio personaggio, poeta e cristiano."

<sup>10</sup>For a summary of Statius' standing in relation to Virgil, see Barolini, *Dante's Poets*, 256-269.

<sup>11</sup>Hawkins, *Dante's Testaments*, 99-124.

<sup>12</sup>For Virgil's medieval reputation, see Comparetti, *Virgil in the Middle Ages*.

<sup>13</sup>See the notes in the editions by Gialalone, Musa, Durling and Martinez, and Hollander. Hollander, *Studies in Dante*, 178-180, suggests that if there is a justification for the tale, it should be sought in Lucan. See also Brownlee, "Dante and the Classical Poets," 110.

<sup>14</sup>See Masters, *Poetry and Civil War*, 179-215, for an overview of Lucan's Erictho and Virgil's Sibyl. As Masters notes, Lucan both draws on the *Aeneid* and opposes it.

<sup>15</sup>Virgil's fallibility is especially evident in *Inferno* 20. Kleiner remarks: "Virgil presents five seers in *Inferno* 20 derived from four different Latin epics, and in every case he either mistakes the tone of the text he is citing or contradicts some basic fact" (*Mismapping the Underworld*, 64). Hollander argues that Dante deliberately misrepresents the classical text ("Dante's Misreadings," 77-93).

<sup>16</sup>For the importance of the tower as a governing motif in *Inferno* 31, see Kleinh  nz, "Dante's Towering Giants."

<sup>17</sup>Kleiner analyzes the measurements Dante provides and demonstrates their confusing and contradictory nature ("Dante's Towering Giants," 45-47). Chiari argues that the dimensions are meant to be poetic rather than mathematically precise ( *Il canto XXXI dell'Inferno*, 17).

<sup>18</sup>Dronke says: "I do not know if it has been remarked that his term for the giants' chains, *le ritorte* (XXXI 111) is likewise Statian (*Theb.* IV 534f: *intorta . . . vincula*)" (*Dante and Medieval Latin Traditions*, 134 n. 18). Moore does not cite this parallel in his *Studies in Dante, First Series*. Pietro Alighieri, Guido da Pisa, Bernardino Daniello da Lucca, Grandgent, Scartazzini, Singleton, Sapegno, Gialalone, Durling and Martinez, Hollander, and Musa do not note this parallel in their commentaries. Daniello, Singleton, Sapegno, and Musa observe that "ritorte" appears again in *Inferno* 19.27, where Dante describes the punishment of Pope Nicholas III.

<sup>19</sup>Dante's son Pietro Alighieri, for example, discusses Lucan's Antaeus at length in his fourteenth-century commentary on the *Commedia* ("super XXXI capitolo *Inferni*," 261).



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ANNE URBANCIC

PLAGIARISM OR FANTASY:  
EXAMINING *NAJA TRIPUDIANS* BY ANNIE VIVANTI

It is late December 1920. Elizabeth Robins (1862-1952) has received a rather worrisome letter to which she feels she must react. Elizabeth is at her home in Bath where she is working on a series of pro-feminist comments on the enormously popular World War I memoirs of Colonel Repington. She has also rekindled her interest in a novel she had started in 1919, *Time Is Whispering*. And while the first work would remain unpublished, the second, the novel, will become another fundamental piece of contemporary feminist writing, along with her subsequent book of essays, *Ancilla's Share: An Indictment of Sex Antagonism* (1924). Elizabeth, widow of George Parks, is well known: a poet, actress, playwright, essayist, well-travelled, published in England and the USA, she is almost 60 now; she has been ill through the autumn of 1920, recovering from complications suffered from dental work.

Perhaps she does not remember the sender of the letter.<sup>1</sup> He seems to think that she will not, and thus he reminds her that he had had the pleasure of accompanying her to dinner many years before, at the home of a mutual friend. He identifies himself as Malcolm McIlwraith and he writes not to renew an acquaintance but to warn her that he has recently read an Italian novel which, as he writes in his note, "bears extraordinary resemblance to your own story, *Where Are You Going To...*? published in 1913.<sup>2</sup> "Indeed", he continues, "the similarity not only with the main situation itself but with many of its incidents is so striking that it seems difficult to believe it can be a mere coincidence." (26 December 1920)

The word 'plagiarism' remains unsaid, although McIlwraith indicates that Elizabeth might wish to read the book for herself. He provides her with all the necessary information. It is an Italian novel of which he speaks, entitled *Naja Tripudians*, published that same year in Florence by Bemporad. It is written by Madame Annie Vivanti (1866-1942),<sup>3</sup> who like Elizabeth is also well known: a poet, actress, playwright, essayist, well-travelled, published in England and the USA. She is, at the time of

McIlwraith's letter, also one of the best selling authors in Italy, since she writes also in Italian.<sup>4</sup>

Annie Vivanti had spent the summer of 1920 completing *Naja Tripudians* in Pecetto, near Torino, where she had taken up residence.<sup>5</sup> Despite their collaboration at the Paris Peace Conference, where she appeared on behalf of the Irish delegates, it seems that by now she and her husband, John Chartres, a London barrister and a Sinn Féiner, regularly spent a great deal of time apart.<sup>6</sup> She was involved mostly in literary activities; surrounded by numerous friends (as was Elizabeth), she was by now not only the doting mother of the former child violinist Vivien, but also the grandmother of Vivien's children. John, on the other hand, concerned himself deeply in pro-Irish matters, fighting the irredentist cause for Ireland. Certainly, with his wife, he was involved in promoting strongly an anti-British sentiment.<sup>7</sup>

We do not know if Elizabeth accepted or not Malcom McIlwraith's suggestion to lend her his copy of Vivanti's novel. We are unaware whether or not she read Italian. However, by mid January of 1921 she must have gathered enough information to decide that she would like to receive legal advice in the matter of proceeding with litigation for plagiarism. The correspondence regarding this affair is an interesting one and consists of twenty-one letters and their relative enclosures from McIlwraith, from her publisher Heinemann, from Mr. Thring, the legal counsel of the Incorporated Society of Authors, Playwrights and Composers in London, from two independent appraisers, one anonymous and one whose name seems to be Sabatini, and from one of Elizabeth's closest friends, Florence Bell. None of the letters is from Elizabeth herself; nor is there among these files correspondence with Annie Vivanti, either to her or from her.<sup>8</sup> In these letters we have the story of the plagiarism accusation as it unfolded chronologically between December 1920 and October 1921. This paper will examine the two novels which are at the centre of the legal investigation, as well as describe the circumstances which led to the writing of Robins' work, and propose some reasons for the existence of Vivanti's work. Finally, the study will also describe the outcome of the plagiarism investigation.

*Where are You Going To...?* is the British title for the novel better known as *My Little Sister*. It is the story of two young women who live in the English countryside with their widowed mother. They are poor but genteel, and their invalid mother aspires to introduce them to upper class friends and acquaintances. Throughout the novel, it is clear that, despite their economic situation, they represent the best of true British society. Most of the novel revolves around the mother's attempts to protect her



daughters from the real world, hoping that they will meet and marry someone of a proper station in life. She herself is a housebound invalid, who uses guilt to keep her daughters as close to home as possible and as far away from a corrupting education as possible. The unnamed older girl, who narrates the story, gives in to the mother. Her acts of rebellion are undertaken in secret. For example, she harbours deep feelings for the young Scottish doctor, Eric Annan, who attends to the mother, and eventually she declares herself to him. She also secretly studies medicine, in the hopes of becoming a woman doctor.<sup>9</sup> When mother discovers the studies, the young woman is forced to put her books aside. There is a younger sister, Bettina, who is rather immature, an outgoing flirt who openly defies mother, stays out late, kisses strange young men who come to visit, but is generally forgiven all her transgressions because of her vivacious deportment and her beauty. The mother herself half hides a deep secret, never quite revealed, but alluded to often enough in the presence of the older daughter to make the reader aware that she is referring to being sexually abused as a child. The mother lives beyond her means; eventually she decides to turn to a relative of her late husband, Aunt Josephine, in London, to give the girls a season in the city to introduce them to marriageable young men of a desirable class. The family spends its money on providing a proper wardrobe for the two girls; a French seamstress is hired to sew for them. The mother, with her British superiority and clearly delineated xenophobia, makes it evident enough that the seamstress is not desirable company. Bettina, on the other hand, makes the French woman her confidante, showing her Aunt Josephine's picture, and then misplacing it. Soon after, the girls go to London. At the train station they are met by a woman posing as their aunt. She is in fact a procuress for the white slave trade. Unknowingly, they are taken to the house, dressed wonderfully, and offered to the gentlemen who come to dinner. The older girl realizes what has happened and with the help of one of the house clients, a man who has taken pity on her, is allowed to escape into dark, foggy London. But Bettina, who has been enjoying the flirting, the clothes, the food, and the drink is left behind. When the older sister tries to retrace her steps with a policeman to rescue her, she becomes lost and delirious. The real Aunt Josephine, who has been looking for her nieces, takes her in; Dr. Annan arrives to help her. The narrator has a dream in which her sister confirms that she is dead, and that in the sacrifice of her young life, the world was to understand that in immortal evil was also the seed of immortal good.

In Annie Vivanti's novel, the title *Naja Tripudians* refers to a cobra snake whose poisonous bite means sure death for its victims. It is the object



of study of Dr. Francis Harding, a British country doctor whose wife has died in childbirth leaving him with two daughters, Myosotis and Leslie. Their home, Rose Cottage, is rather isolated and the girls are brought up with very little practical education. Lady Randolph Grey takes up summer residence in the nearby village, where she enchants the local inhabitants with her genteel manners, her famous acquaintances and her cultured soirees. She herself takes an interest in the motherless Harding girls, now 19 and 15 respectively, and entreats their father to allow her to give them a proper coming out season in London. The father allows them to go, and after much discussion with their trustworthy nurse and cook, as well as with the advice columnist of a Leeds newspaper, Zia Marianna, (who turns out to be a harassed man who is simultaneously the newspaper editor, and the writer of most of the letters to both the Zia and the editor), the two girls depart. Lady Randolph sends her car to pick them up at the station and takes them to luxurious quarters, where they are shown to well appointed rooms, filled with new clothes. She instructs them how to dress for her guests at lunch. Myosotis begins to suspect that all is not well when she realizes that her dress is sleeveless, and diaphanous. She is also uncomfortable with the instruction that Leslie must appear to be a twelve-year-old girl. Only men are present at the lunch, where there is much to drink. Morphine is given to the addicted cat with horrifying results; cocaine is brought out in honour of the transvestite who had arrived late for the lunch. While Myosotis refuses to drink, Leslie does imbibe. Myosotis, afraid, runs to her room and tries to escape through the windows, but cannot. She returns to the drawing room to find that her sister has already been given cocaine and an injection of morphine, and is hallucinating. Heeding her sister's delirious entreaty that she should try to escape, she runs to the front door where a maid takes pity on her and unlocks it for her. Myosotis runs through the thickening dusk to find a policeman, but is unable to retrace her steps with him. The address that had been given to her as Lady Randolph Grey's house turns out to be a post office. She runs from street to street, from square to square, from one police station to another, but all in vain. The house is never found.

The two stories, separated in publication by almost a decade, show undeniable similarities. Elizabeth's publishing house, Heinemann, is appalled; their representative, Sidney Pawling, writes to her on 21 January 1921 in a confidential letter:

On the face of it, it seems a scandal. You may remember that we published some books by the same author, who wrote both in English and Italian.<sup>10</sup> She was well acquainted with our list and lived a good deal in

London—and was introduced in the first instance, I think, by Magda Heinemann....The lady's husband, Chartres, I knew well. He was a barrister in the Temple, without, I think, much practice and was a pedant. I may say privately, that I have always deprecated the association we had with them. I think that you probably have enough evidence of the robbery, but I am having the two books gone through today by a very competent Italian scholar, well acquainted with literary matters both in England and in continental countries.

So it seems that Vivanti stood accused also because of Pawling's dislike of her husband. In his next letter to her, dated 25 January 1921, Pawling assures Elizabeth that he has "received from a friend of high intelligence (who has read the Italian book)", the report he had solicited, and he encloses it for her to read. The unnamed reviewer begins by declaring that "the theme and plot of the two books are exactly the same. Granted that the theme is not an uncommon one it is almost inconceivable that two brains should have worked out the plot and should have invented such a quantity of parallel incidents quite independently" (enclosure to Pawling's letter, 25 January 1921, p. 1). In hindsight, there are serious problems with this anonymous report. First, the Italian book is consistently identified as *Naja Tripualian*, discrediting the possibility of a careful reading. Then, later, the author of the report points out that there is clear evidence of plagiarism in the closing chapters of Vivanti's novel because

[t]here is however one rather interesting and ingenious plagiarism still to be mentioned. Quite at the end of Miss Robins' novel (when the elder girl sees the vision of her dead sister) consolation is brought to the living girl by the idea that God has allowed the sacrifice of an innocent victim so that thousands may be saved, —that is by this hideous story becoming known to the world and arousing society to the canker in its midst. (Enclosure to Pawling's letter, 25 January 1921, p. 5)

The conclusion of *My Little Sister*, however, is quite unlike that of *Naja Tripudians*; no similar description, scene, or consolatory moral is found in the latter. Vivanti herself was aware that her readers might expect a moralising or even a conventional conclusion, and already in her preface, she announced that there would be a lack of closure to her novel:

—La fine?—dirà qualcuno.—Ma questo libro non ha fine! Alla notte segue l'alba, e all'alba il giorno... Che accadde poi di Leslie [cioè la sorella rimasta nella casa di tolleranza]. Io rispondo: La vita non finisce soltanto colla morte. La storia di Leslie è finita... <<The rest is silence>>. (Preface)<sup>11</sup>

Later in the report, the reader quotes as further proof of plagiarism two similar passages. The first he identifies as coming from Vivanti's novel. It is the observation of a minor character, speaking to Dr. Harding:

Whilst you were speaking of the NAJA I was thinking of the human vipers which love to bite into clean flesh and poison innocent souls—the “naie” of our great cities whose joy-dancing (tripualian) [sic: the original Italian reads: *di cui è tripudio*] consists in contaminating [sic] and corrupting all that is sacred and healthy in the world.

The reviewer continues:

The same motif as in Miss Robins' book is somewhat differently expressed in the passage which follows. “We live in the midst of a moral leprousy and do not fear contagion. At every step we knock against human reptiles—and do not destroy them—we do not crush their heads under our feet. We pass them by seeking remedies for all other diseases—physical infirmities—poverty—social revolution etc. But who will find a cure for contamination of the spirit, for cancer of the soul?” (Enclosure to Pawling's letter, 25 January 1921, p. 6)

Once again, while the young Scottish doctor in Robins' novel is a cancer researcher, the passage above does not appear in *My Little Sister* as purported. It does, however, appear, exactly as translated in Vivanti's novel (p. 132). Thus it seems that the reviewer had caused some confusion by apparently offering as proof of Vivanti's plagiarism two quotes from Vivanti's novel. A second reviewer, Sabatini, does not even go into specific examples before pronouncing, on one double-spaced page, his judgement. He writes:

I have now read WHERE ARE YOU GOING TO? and I have skimmed NAJA TRIPUDIANS. This superficial glance alone is sufficient to convince me that the latter would never have come into existence but for the former. The similarity of lay-out is not so striking in the early part of the Italian book, although even here the influence of the English novel is quite perceptible. But in the later part, the situation in NAJA TRIPUDIANS is almost identical with that in WHERE ARE YOU GOING TO? And it is developed by means of characters of quite similar types. Some incidents appear to lifted [sic] bodily from the English book. I can discover no merit or distinction in what kittle [sic] I have examined closely of the Italian book. It seems to be a very crude piece of writing.” (Enclosure to Thring's letter, 17 March 1921).

If the two readers had merely skimmed the Italian book, the first had nevertheless read its *Preface*, in which Annie Vivanti declares that her book is not merely fantasy but has been based on a factual story: "Non ho ideato questa storia: è la Realtà, terribile Romanziera, che la concepì e creò. Fu lei che mi cantò le chiare note del principio; fu lei che mi dettò le nere pagine della fine" (*Preface*). Thus, he ends his report by undermining it with his cautious question:

As I have already stated this seems to me an undoubted case of plagiarism but I am not well enough acquainted with the law to express an opinion as to whether an injunction would be successful. Is it not the case that Miss Robins [sic] story is found on fact? If that is so, could not the Italian author plead that facts are history and therefore anybody's property? (Enclosure to Pawling's letter, 25 January 1921, p. 6)

This will be the precise point of interest for Mr. Thring, legal counsel for the Incorporated Society of Authors, Playwrights and Composers to whom the matter has been referred. His correspondence with Elizabeth asks her to name her source for the novel. His response to her subsequent answer is not unexpected:

Dear Madam,  
I am in receipt of your letter the contents of which I am sending on to our Solicitors. I am afraid it rather argues that there may be a common origin, for if the story was told to you by a friend it may have been told to someone else. (10 May 1921)

Angela V. John, in her study of Elizabeth Robins has claimed that the story was originally told to Elizabeth by Maude Pember Reeves in 1907.<sup>12</sup> Mrs. Reeves, a feminist and socialist, was most active in various women's organizations, among them also the Women's Trade Union League, the National Anti-Sweating League, and the Fabian Women's Group. She was an active worker for women's suffrage and had become interested in the numerous stories and articles describing how innocent girls were being captured or enticed into the white slave trade. The stories were legion. As early as 1885 the *Pall Mall Gazette* had published a scandalous and bold plan by journalist W.T. Stead, a friend of Elizabeth's, to procure a thirteen-year old girl just to show how easily it could be done.<sup>13</sup> In the years following various congresses had been held throughout Europe to discuss the matter. Not surprisingly, numerous cases of kidnapping for procurement, or white slavery, came to light, either to police stations, or to social workers, or by letter through the Letters to Editor pages of various newspapers.

When Elizabeth began her short but intense friendship with poet John Masefield in 1909, he himself was working on a story about white slavery, *Docet Umbra*. Together they planned to write a play about the topic, but never completed it. Elizabeth used the material for the novel instead. Such was the public fascination with the topic that by the time Elizabeth had finished her novel, it was already much whispered about. *McClure's Magazine* asked Heinemann to hold off publication so that the story could appear first in serialized form (in two parts, beginning in December 1912). Angela John notes that when the Elizabeth's book was published, readers clamoured for assurance that it was fiction, but Robins, like Vivanti after her, claimed that it was based on fact. When the suffragette Christabel Pankhurst wanted to know who the family in the story was, Robins refused to reveal more information.<sup>14</sup> Perhaps Elizabeth had forgotten her 1907 correspondence with Maude Pember Reeves regarding the matter. In response to Elizabeth's enquiry for the same information that Pankhurst wished to have, Pember Reeves had written:

Dear Miss Robins—Personally I can see no objection to your using the story about the two girls & the house in London. It was told me by a cousin who did not know the people herself either. She said it had been told her by someone who did. I believe she did not even know their name. It seems to me that a story which has been handed on so many times becomes—as long as the real names are never introduced—a kind of public property. I quite agree with you in thinking this one full of dramatic force. Having been handed on so many times it is likely that the story has been irreversibly altered in detail each time. It, therefore, is anybody's story now. If my memory serves me it occurred at least fifteen years ago. ... Yours affect.ly Maude Reeves. ( 22 May 1907)

While *My Little Sister*, was enjoying its enormous success, journalist Teresa Billington-Grieg was researching the stories that had been told of the victims of the white slave trade. Carefully documenting the occurrences through police records, social workers, and alleged victims, she published an article entitled "The Truth About White Slavery" in the *English Review* of June 1913. Her detailed research overwhelmingly discounted the existence of an organized white slave trade; most of the stories, she claimed, could not be corroborated. She concluded her article with a diatribe against those who continued to allow the stories to proliferate as truth:

We have achieved nothing for the victims of exploited prostitution by this panic ... Those responsible for it may have obtained ease of mind, the selfish satisfaction of having accomplished something. But that is mere-



ly the measure of their folly. For the rest they have given emphatic justification to those who question the responsibility of women in public affairs; they have provided arms and ammunition for the enemy of women's emancipation. The Fathers of the Old Church made a mess of the world by teaching the Adam story and classing women as unclean; the Mothers of the new Church are threatening the future by white-washing of women and the doctrine of the uncleanness of men.<sup>15</sup>

Although they never met, the lives of Elizabeth Robins and Annie Vivanti overlapped in many ways. How similar their career paths were has already been pointed out, as has the fact that they both published with Heinemann, and both were friends of Magda Heinemann. While she lived in London and the USA, it would not be unlikely that Annie would have read the same journalistic material regarding the white slave trade as had Elizabeth. Elizabeth and Annie both published articles in the same popular magazines, magazines in which such melodramatic fare was commonplace. Furthermore, Elizabeth had compiled much of her novel's background in close collaboration with writer and poet laureate John Masefield, and he himself had provided the preface to the British edition of Reginald Wright Kaufmann's popular American novel about the white slave trade in New York.<sup>16</sup> Certainly, his life and Annie's did overlap in the literary sense since both had published in the same family magazine, *Pall Mall Magazine*.<sup>17</sup> Annie was also most interested in the cinema and may also have seen the filmed version of Elizabeth's novel (1919),<sup>18</sup> or even had read the novel itself before undertaking her own Italian version of it.

The preparations for the lawsuit naturally focussed on the similarities between the two works. The differences, however, are much more obvious, and include thematic and stylistic dissimilarities. The most striking division, however, is in the attitude taken by Elizabeth Robins toward men in her novel. Two are her main motives. First, she was deeply disappointed that the promised collaboration with Masefield never took place, and that, indeed, the friendship, despite its original intensity, almost completely waned after this. In fact, she was most hurt that his reaction to receiving the proofs of her novel was a cold one. Secondly, while she wrote, Elizabeth was in contact with members of Salvation Army who worked with London's prostitutes. From them she learned that many young prostitutes were first abused by their fathers, and she used this information in painting the portrait of the mother in her novel. Accordingly, the attitude she emphasized in her novel was that men, generally, were animal-like in their sexual desires, and that men who frequented brothels, particularly, were predators, individuals of great depraved power, promoting prostitution for

economic gain. Vivanti, on the other hand, used her novel to promote two completely different issues: first, her strong anti-British feelings and, secondly, her equally strong opinion that young women should be well educated, because social status would not protect them. Both attitudes can be clearly seen in the following sarcastic passage of *Naja Tripudians*:

E a scuola andarono, ogni giorno, le due biondine, e impararono tutto ciò che ancora mancava alla loro perfetta educazione. Impararono che il mondo è rotondo e appartiene agli inglesi; che gli oceani sono vasti e appartengono agli inglesi; che gli inglesi permettono —generosamente— ad alcune altre nazioni di vivere nel mondo, e ad alcune altre navi —ma poche!— di navigare sui mari. Impararono che bisogna odiare i tedeschi, disprezzare i latini, e aver schifo dei negri. Impararono che il Dio inglese non riceve che la domenica, mentre il plebeo Dio cattolico (che del resto non serve che per gli straccioni, i forastieri e gli Irlandesi) lascia aperte le sue chiese tutti i giorni, ma non bisogna andarci. Impararono che il sentimento è una cosa volgare; che è ridicolo commuoversi, che è indecoroso entusiasinarsi; che la frutta si mangia col coltello e la forchetta, e che le unghie e la coscienza—ma soprattutto le unghie!—vanno tenute pulite.... Così, preparate ed agguerrite alla vita, si affacciarono le due bionde sorelline alla soglia della giovinezza ... (p. 26)

Over and over Vivanti points to their lack of education as being the real downfall of the two sisters.

There is a further difference between the two works. In *Naja*, unlike in Robins' novel, the illicit drug culture is detailed with its lurid and horrific effects. I have mentioned above the focus that Annie gives to the use of cocaine and morphine in her novel. Her descriptions of the lunch where Leslie is injected with morphine for the first time recall an article that Vivanti had written a year earlier for *La Donna*, the women's magazine of *La Stampa*. There she describes the notorious case of a young British actress, Billie Carleton, who had died of an overdose of cocaine in early December 1918. The ensuing court case filled the daily papers well into January of 1919. Annie used that article, too, as a journalistic mouthpiece for her anti-British sentiments.<sup>19</sup>

Our question remains, though. Was there any plagiarism on Annie's part or did Robins and Vivanti merely have two coinciding imaginations?

In early June 1921, Elizabeth Robins, now at Henfield, received another letter regarding the alleged plagiarism. It was from the solicitor, Herbert Thring:

Dear Madam,

Many thanks for your letter. I was, as a matter of fact, hoping to write to you today as we have just had a meeting of the Committee (of



Management). The Committee have now considered carefully all the evidence and they have found that the story has been told in a great many places, and one of our members said that he had heard it told as a true story....” (8 June 1921)

Mr. Thring asks Elizabeth if she wishes to withdraw her case. Elizabeth apparently agrees to do so; his subsequent letter assures her that she need not regret the trouble and money expended in the matter (June 11, 1921).

But as with many letters, this affair too, has a post-script. Several months later, in October 1921, Florence Bell is still staunchly defending her friend Elizabeth. She drafts a letter to the French reviewer of *Naja Tripudians*, Maurice Muret,<sup>20</sup> informing him of the plagiarism. She first sends a copy of the draft to Elizabeth, asking for her permission to send it on because “[t]his seems to me rather an interesting thing to do. I have not put it insultingly although I thought of some rather effective furiosities as I went on, which I regretfully dismissed!” (10 October 1921)

It is clear that while the solicitors had made a judgement for the coinciding imaginations, Elizabeth’s friends had decided otherwise.

There is no record of any reply.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Permission to quote this letter and all others to which I refer has been kindly provided by the Fales Library in the Elmer Holmes Bobst Library, New York University, New York, where the Elizabeth Robins Papers are housed. I also wish to express my sincere gratitude to the Victoria College Research Grants Committee (University of Toronto) whose generous consideration allowed me to study Vivanti’s “New York” material in various libraries in that city.

<sup>2</sup>Robins, *Where Are You Going To...*; published also as *My Little Sister*. The story was serialized in *McClure’s Magazine* (from December 1912).

<sup>3</sup>This is a correction to the generally accepted birth date of 1868, with thanks to Prof. Carlo Caporossi who succeeded in finding Vivanti’s birth certificate.

<sup>4</sup>The first printing of *Naja*, as with most of Annie’s books of the period, was of 100,000 copies, in an era when the average first issue in Italy was 3,000-4,000 copies. Cf. Giocondi, *Best seller italiani*.

<sup>5</sup>Allason, “Ricordi di Annie Vivanti.”

<sup>6</sup>Cf. Murphy, *John Chartres*.

<sup>7</sup>Cf. Murphy, *John Chartres*.

<sup>8</sup>The Archive also contains the pencilled version of the story as Elizabeth had heard it. It is entitled “Prostitution”.

<sup>9</sup>In this is a wonderful tribute to Elizabeth's close friend Octavia Wilberforce (1888-1963), a medical student whom Elizabeth had met in 1909.

<sup>10</sup>The books are: *The Hunt for Happiness* (1896), *The Devourers* (1910) and *Marie Tarnowska* (1915).

<sup>11</sup>Although she may not have been considering it at the time, Vivanti's decision allowed her to produce a sequel twelve years later. Cf. Vivanti, *Salvate le nostre anime*.

<sup>12</sup>John, *Elizabeth Robins*.

<sup>13</sup>The resulting articles, "Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon" were published in Stead's *Pall Mall Gazette* (July 1885). Stead was then charged with unlawfully kidnaping a minor and spent three months in prison. Subsequently, the British parliament passed an act raising the age of consent from 13 to 16 and strengthening the legislation against prostitution.

<sup>14</sup>John, *Elizabeth Robins*, p. 191.

<sup>15</sup>Billington-Grieg, "The Truth About White Slavery," p. 446.

<sup>16</sup>Kaufmann's *House of Bondage* was subsequently published, with Masfield's preface, as *Daughters of Ishmael*. It had a decidedly xenophobic attitude. *House of Bondage* was made into a film in 1914, starring Lottie Pickford (Mary's sister). Apparently there had also been a Broadway adaptation of the book earlier in 1914. Cf. Parish, *Prostitution in Hollywood Films*. Parish lists 20 other prostitution/white slave trade movie titles produced by Hollywood between 1913 and 1920.

<sup>17</sup>Cf. *Pall Mall Magazine* 40, No. 173 (Sept. 1907) in which a poem by Masfield and an article by Vivien Chartres, Annie's daughter, with preface by Annie, appear.

<sup>18</sup>It appears that the Fox Film Corporation had produced the film without permission from Elizabeth, who first found out about it when she approached her literary agent about movie rights for *My Little Sister* in July 1944.

<sup>19</sup>Vivanti, "La corsa all'Estasi e all'Oblio," p. 24.

<sup>20</sup>Muret, "Un roman de Mme Annie Vivanti", *Journal des débats* (30 Septembre 1921), 3. Muret had mentioned Annie already in his 1906 volume *La Littérature italienne d'aujourd'hui*, saying of her that among contemporary women writers, the reading public "connaît-de réputation, tout au moins-la poésie tourmentée d'Annie Vivanti" (p. 178).

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LUCIA RE

VALENTINE DE SAINT-POINT, RICCIOTTO CANUDO,  
F. T. MARINETTI: EROTICISM, VIOLENCE AND FEMINISM  
FROM PREWAR PARIS TO COLONIAL CAIRO

I. Valentine de Saint-Point, Woman Warrior

In her "Manifeste de la femme futuriste" (1912) and "Manifeste futuriste de la luxure" (1913), Valentine de Saint-Point ostensibly came to the defense of women against the abuses of futurist misogyny, yet her manifestos have suffered a critical fate similar to that of Marinetti's *Manifesto futuriste*, and Valentine has gained a notoriety of her own.<sup>1</sup> Even her avant-garde practice of abstract choreography and dance before and during the First World War has come to be regarded with suspicion as fascistic, anti-feminist and unfeminine.<sup>2</sup>

De Saint-Point is without question one of the more baffling among the futurist women; she is also effectively the first "official" woman futurist, and one of the most original. Her association with futurism was actually rather brief, though significant. She was an extraordinarily independent woman and, as the extended research by the Tunisian feminist critic and historian Fawzia Zouari has revealed, she lived a complex and highly unusual life.<sup>3</sup> Most critics, however, have identified Valentine de Saint-Point solely with her futurist manifestos, ignoring or dismissing the rest of her life and work. Even more paradoxically, they have made Valentine de Saint-Point herself the principal representative of women's participation in futurism, and of all the negative, anti-feminist and fascistic traits that are supposed to have characterized it as a whole.

To be sure the two manifestos are shocking and filled with violent pronouncements and images. Yet to view them as "representative" or symptomatic in this way, and especially as proto-fascist, means to simplify excessively and to take them out of their specific historical and cultural context. The powerful language of the manifestos has contributed to its a-historical reading. Indeed, the fact that her texts continue to be so topical and controversial is indicative of the way in which Valentine anticipated many of the most contested questions of contemporary feminist theory and criticism while claiming a space for women within the avant-garde.

Contrary to what most critics maintain in the light of her distant relation to Alphonse de Lamartine and her impressive list of names,<sup>4</sup> Valentine de Saint-Point (also known as Anne-Jeanne-Valentine-Marianne Desglans de Cessiat-Vercell) did not come from a privileged aristocratic background. Her aristocratic names, including de Saint-Point, were of her own devising, with only tenuous anagraphical foundations and legitimacy. Born Anna Jean Valentine Vercell in 1875 in Lyon, she was the daughter of an insurance agent who died when she was eight, and of a provincial middle-class widow, Alice Vercell. Alice, who had been born out of wedlock, was a very strict mother. She had Valentine educated at home by a tutor. Alice's mother (a seamstress) had been the mistress of a nephew of the poet Lamartine, Emmanuel de Cessiat, who married her only in extremis.

Yet Valentine's self-naming was not simply a way of acquiring—however fictionally—higher social status and prestige. Like Rawhiyya Nouredine (the name she chose when she converted to Islam),<sup>5</sup> her names reveal instead her disregard for the conventions of bourgeois identity and gender, and her life-long propensity for self-fashioning and nomadism. Valentine's transformative, restless and multiple approach to her identity resembles the nomadic subjectivity later theorized by Rosi Braidotti.<sup>6</sup> For Braidotti, the nomadic subject is marked by non-adherence to rules, roles, and prescribed models of behaviour. Nomadic subjectivity allows for "disengagement and disidentification from the socio-symbolic institution of femininity" (*Metamorphoses* 40).

One of the ways in which Valentine disengaged herself from the institution of femininity in early twentieth-century France was by forging an imaginary and empowering connection with Lamartine. From childhood, encouraged by the maternal grandmother, Valentine had developed a veritable passion for Lamartine, with whom she identified profoundly. Saint-Point is the name of the mountain village where Lamartine was buried in 1869. Through her cult of Lamartine, Valentine seems to have compensated for the lack of a father, creating a powerful masculine model for herself. As we shall see, she also cultivated a spectacular, even shocking femininity. Lamartine's predilection for Italy and the Orient (particularly Egypt and Morocco) especially influenced Valentine, as did Lamartine's mysticism, his utopian political fervour, and his intense erotic life. Lamartine expressed great admiration for what he called "the genius" of the Prophet Mohammed and for the creation of Islam and the Muslim religion (276-277). This admiration too was to have profound repercussions on Valentine.

Against the hopes of her mother and grandmother, Valentine married a petty-bourgeois lycée teacher, Florian Perrenot. They settled down to a



dull provincial life in the district of the Jura, but Valentine soon took a lover, Charles Dumont, a radical socialist and a teacher of philosophy. Encouraged by Valentine, he moved on to politics and became the Jura representative to the parliament in 1898. His apoplectic fit left Valentine a widow, free to discard the Perrenot name and move to Paris, where she married Dumont on the first day of the new century. The spectacle of politics in the French Third Republic, however, and the discovery of the life of dreary compromises led by her husband and his colleagues increasingly nauseated her. In the Paris of the belle époque (where Marinetti was also living off and on at the time) Valentine began leading an electrifying life, first turning herself not into a typical politician's wife but rather into a *flâneuse*. She was thus a rare female counterpart of the traditionally male figure of the *flâneur*, the man of the crowd idealized by Baudelaire. The couple was divorced in 1904 and there was an amicable (though unofficial) settlement.<sup>7</sup> (Dumont went on to become a senator, and was minister in several cabinets until his death in 1939).

Although a notable group of famously liberated and unconventional women lived in Paris at the time, including Colette, Rachilde, Sarah Bernhardt, and the expatriates Natalie Barney, Edith Wharton and Gertrude Stein, the prevalent ethos among French women and in French society in general was the bourgeois feminine ideal that regarded family and motherhood as the only appropriate mission for women. Even Colette suffered deeply from this discriminatory and sacrificial ethos, and all the earnings from her writings were pocketed by her husband Willy, who pretended to be the sole author of the *Claudine* novels until Rachilde discovered the truth. Egalitarian legal reforms continued to assume the primacy of women's maternal role, as did the French feminist movement. Suffragism was never popular (women in France obtained the vote only after World War Two).<sup>8</sup> French women were generally educated to believe in a sacrificial ethics of femininity. Woman was to devote herself entirely to her husband and children. She was not supposed to feel sexual desire, but rather feminine "love." Feminine love was to be tender, affectionate, and compliant. To reject this bourgeois feminine ideal, Valentine de Saint-Point, while pointedly refusing to become a wife and mother, constructed the image of a strong woman that took the notion of maternity and of the female body to radical, provocative extremes. She was thus equally unacceptable to the conservatives and to the moderate, reformist feminists.

Valentine published her first volume of poetry, *Poèmes de la mer et du soleil*, in 1905. One of Valentine's poems appeared in 1908 in Marinetti's *Poesia*, which later published several other poems by her. Valentine's flam-

boyant style of dressing in an orientalist fashion (especially after a visit to Morocco, following Lamartine's footsteps), her unusually colourful and immense hats and cloaks eventually earned her the nickname of "la Muse pourpre," a reference to her preference for red and purple.

In her penchant for feminine masquerade and orientalist ornamentation, Valentine seems to have been an example of "sartorial female fetishism."<sup>9</sup> From the start, Valentine's display of feminine *luxe* and her propensity for masquerade and veiling entailed a strong element of daring, "masculine" volition. It thus had little in common with Joan Riviere's notion—theorized in her classic 1929 essay—that womanliness is often nothing but a masquerade, a strategy. According to Riviere, woman, when confronted with a men's world, wears womanliness as a mask, "both to hide the possession of masculinity and to avert the reprisals expected if she was found to possess it" (42). Valentine instead created and boldly projected the image of a strong, "masculine" femininity that was neither submissive nor reducible to the paranoid stereotype of the femme fatale despised by the futurists. Indeed, it was precisely this aura that first attracted Marinetti, who felt for a time that Valentine could embody the new futurist woman. However, Valentine's vision of the female body and the cognitive and spiritual role that she attributed to eroticism eventually clashed with Marinetti's more athletic, casual and materialist notion of sexuality.

For Valentine *luxe* was essentially an expression of female *luxure*, a way of eroticizing the body and the objects in contact with it. Valentine's theory of desire or *luxure* implied, as we shall see, a liberation of all forms of desire, unbound from the bourgeois (as well as fascist) imperatives of reproduction and the restrictions of the patriarchal family, as well as from the symbolic rule of the father that still informed a large section of the avant-garde. The worrisome, even dangerously evil connection between female luxury (both sartorial and cosmetic) and a wasteful, self-serving female lust (rather than procreative sexuality) celebrated by Baudelaire was re-appropriated by Valentine as an expression of female power and eroticism. In the manifesto "Contro il lusso femminile" (1920), written in the postwar climate of male paranoia and resentment against emancipated women, Marinetti would later criticize female vanity and women's pleasurable, sensual display of elegance as selfish and emasculating, calling it a morbid negation of "true desire" (*Teoria* 547).<sup>10</sup> Female eroticism and any form of wasteful feminine ornamentation were anathema to the fascist regime, which generally encouraged moralism in sexual matters for women and sought to inculcate modesty along with parsimony and family values.

Shortly after her entrance into Parisian society, Mucha painted

Valentine's portrait and Rodin used her as a model for several of his sculptures. (They and Marinetti were rumored to be her lovers). Soon afterwards, she began to paint and sculpt herself, showing her works (none of which appear to be extant) at the Salons des Indépendants. Turning her gaze back on the master for whom she modelled, in 1913 she wrote an essay on Rodin and lectured on him, praising him for replacing the classical anthropomorphic and mimetic ideal with a more "architectural," abstract approach.<sup>11</sup> Abstraction, and the rejection of mimesis, were at the same time becoming essential elements of her new theory of choreography.

Valentine soon had her own atelier that also functioned as a salon, where evenings of music, poetry, dance and theatre performances were held. She befriended Vivian du Mas and began attending theosophical meetings and spiritualist soirées, a common activity among Parisian intellectuals and even avant-garde writers and artists. At one of these evenings she met the man who was to become her "soul mate" until the First World War, Ricciotto Canudo. Canudo, whose complex role as cultural mediator between Italy and France is still scarcely understood, is often incorrectly assumed to have been a fanatical French nationalist, and Valentine's association with him is sometimes used as evidence of her own reactionary leanings.<sup>12</sup>

Canudo was a southern Italian (from a small town near Bari) who studied literature and oriental languages and religions in Florence and Rome, where he moved in literary and theosophical circles. He helped Valentine improve her spoken Italian (like her adored Lamartine, Valentine was a great Italophile). In 1910, Canudo invited her along with Apollinaire and others to join him in Brussels for a lecture series on Italian literature. Apollinaire lectured on Aretino. Valentine's lecture, later published as an essay, was entitled "La femme dans la littérature" and was the first in a series of talks that testify to her idiosyncratic feminism and deep interest in the question of women's creativity and their relationship to the institutions of literature, theatre and the arts.<sup>13</sup>

In her knowledgeable overview of woman as icon in Italian literature from Dante on, and of the literary production by Italian women, Valentine perceptively points to the restrictions that Italian culture and society still placed on women even in the early twentieth century, in contrast to the relatively freer intellectual exchange and socialization allowed in France, especially after the reinstatement of divorce. She refers explicitly to Sibilla Aleramo's *Una donna* as well as to the feminist novels by Bruno Sperani, Marchesa Colombi, Regina di Luanto and others, remarking that in Italy women writers were still in the position of having to denounce and expose

in their works the psychological and ideological as well as institutional oppression of women, whose bodies and minds were not yet free. In contrast, Valentine argues, women in France were freer to live according to their own desires. Their literature, therefore, was less concerned with the kind of social issues that make *Una donna* a powerful feminist pamphlet than with the question of how to create a specifically feminine esthetics and a feminine voice.

Valentine acknowledges the stature and greatness of Matilde Serao and Grazia Deledda, but observes not only that they are decidedly anti-feminist, but that they have embraced a masculine perspective and have not contributed to reveal anything new and genuine about female psychology. Their writing does not reveal their sex, Valentine asserts. Valentine cites on the other hand two poets as examples of an Italian feminine avant-garde in this sense: Amalia Guglielminetti and Térésah. She quotes extensively from Guglielminetti's *Seduzioni*, a book that she calls unsentimental, violently sensual and daring, and a model for all women poets. Térésah's work on the other hand, from which she quotes extensively in her own translation into French, is in her view more abstract, imaginative, ironic and almost phantasmagoric. (Térésah was also a favorite of Palazzeschi's at the time). Valentine's critical assessment is of course a reflection of her poetic taste and of tendencies in her own writing, though recent appreciations of Guglielminetti show that Valentine's evaluation was perhaps less subjective and more farsightedly feminist than it might have previously appeared.<sup>14</sup>

Like Marinetti's early poems, Valentine's poems and prose poems, including *Poèmes d'orgueil* (1908), *La Guerre* (1912) and *La Soif et le mirage* (1912), belong in esthetic and formal terms to the mode of late symbolism. They are, however, notable in terms of images and themes, a central one being female sexuality and desire or "lust," to which she attributes a potentially disruptive and violent power. Valentine describes desire in extreme terms, as that which can never be fulfilled, an endless, unsatisfiable drive: "Le Désir / Qui crée les désirs / Insatiabement . . . Nulle paix, ni détente, ni satisfaction" (*La Soif* 19). Desire is thus a "force," a potentially devastating energy, and is connected to fantasies of both violence and war—the ultimate discharge of libidinal energies. Violence and war are themes that Valentine placed at the centre of her two futurist manifestos of 1912 and 1913.

Classic futurist topoi such as the train, the automobile, and the airplane that appear in her poetry are regarded from a woman's point of view. Valentine celebrates the new, accelerated, and compressed perception of time and space and the different kinds of desire and imagination that are generated in her by the experience of speed and flying. It is therefore not



surprising that Marinetti should find Valentine interesting as a poet (a review of *Poèmes d'orgueil* appeared in *Poesia* in June 1908) and attempt to enlist her in the futurist ranks.

The female subject depicted or speaking in Valentine's texts, either directly or indirectly, is the antithesis of the inert, tender, passive and compliant bourgeois female. Her poetry is saturated with sadistic and masochistic fantasies. Ironically, Valentine's notion of desire is reminiscent (or perhaps a precursor) of Freud's and of those of later Freudian theorists, including Klaus Theweleit, invoked to chastise Valentine's supposedly fascistic perversion and deviant femininity.

The most important intellectual influence on Valentine, however, was Nietzsche, who had died in 1900. A two-volume French translation of *Der Wille zur Macht* was published in 1903, but Valentine was already familiar with Nietzsche's radical thought from the days of her affair with Dumont. In "Preparatory Human Beings," a famous fragment of *The Gay Science* (*Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft*, 1887), Nietzsche had succinctly formulated his ethics of violence: "I welcome all signs that a more virile, warlike age is about to begin . . . the age that will carry heroism into the search for knowledge and that will wage wars for the sake of ideas and their consequences" (228). It is a motif that deeply resonates in Valentine's poetry and prose. Valentine saw herself as one of Nietzsche's preparatory human beings and wholly embraced his ethics of regenerative violence even as she rejected Nietzsche's vision of woman's sexuality. For Nietzsche, women's sexuality resided entirely in the desire to be possessed ("Woman wants to be taken and accepted as a possession, wants to be absorbed into the concept of possession, possessed" *The Gay Science* 319). For Valentine, however, this desire represents only one side of female sexuality, or a possible gender position for woman as well as man.

Between 1906 and 1910, Valentine published a series of Nietzsche-inspired novels, including *Un amour*, *Un inceste* and *Une mort*, which formed the *Trilogie de l'amour et de la mort*. She also published the novel *Une femme et le désir* (1910) and *L'Orbe pâle*, a book of prose poems (1911). These novels and prose poems have a distinctly Dannunzian flavor, but are written from a decidedly female perspective with strong (if idiosyncratic) feminist implications. The latter two works in particular delineate the phantasmatic image of a phallic woman, with a sword in her hand, that still has the power to scandalize.<sup>15</sup> For although Valentine, like Freud, asserts the power of the libido in both women and men, her woman oversteps the very limits of "womanhood" articulated first by Nietzsche and later by Freud in his theory of the female as always "castrated."

In her desire to counter the turn-of-the-century misogynist scenario of sexual difference (that influenced deeply both Nietzsche and Freud) and the dogma of the inferiority and passivity of woman, Valentine polemically sees the symbolic phallus as a sign of power and strength that can be woman's as well as man's. Valentine's imagination thus still envisions a phallic symbolic economy, but in fantasizing a powerful phallic woman Valentine steps outside its traditional male boundaries. For while for Freud the phallic desire, that he called "penis envy" (an expression that first appeared in a 1908 essay),<sup>16</sup> is a phase of the little girl's immature sexuality that in the mature woman is transformed into the desire to have a child and to be sexually possessed by man, Valentine's powerful woman is simultaneously both phallic and a mother, both "masculine" and "feminine." Valentine's phallic woman embodies a fantasized creative potency.

In creating the image of an ideal, superior and phallic woman (a kind of woman warrior) Valentine is not immune to the suggestions of the Darwinian and Lamarckian evolutionist scenario that deeply influenced Nietzsche and Marinetti. Yet her view of woman effectively reverses both Darwin's and Nietzsche's. Nietzsche had written: "This is how I want man and woman: the one a good warrior, the other a good mother, but both good dancers with the head and legs" (*Thus Spoke Zarathustra* III, 23). Valentine, instead, set out to show that a woman could be as good a warrior/dancer as man. Valentine's fantasy of female virility does not subtend a proto-fascist tendency to identify with the male leader and his violence while simultaneously construing femininity passively, through the optic of male domination and female subjection. On the contrary, Valentine's ideas and narratives constitute a set of liberatory fantasies, the imaginary staging of "another woman." They are formulated precisely in opposition to the dominant notion of the feminine as exclusively and fatefully inert and inferior.

Before becoming a performer and going on the stage as a dancer, Valentine also wrote for and about the theatre, attempting to create a new tragic "Théâtre de la Femme," and publishing *Le Déchu*, a drama performed in 1909 at the Théâtre des Arts. Valentine observed that although woman was everywhere in the theatre, the privileged subject of endless plays, the actual individuality and complexity of women remained invisible. She felt that most authors (D'Annunzio in particular) relied on stereotypes, endlessly rehearsing the male-created opposition between the self-sacrificial woman and the destructive femme fatale. Even Ibsen's women seemed types rather than complex individuals ("Le Théâtre de la femme," *Manifeste* 39-40). *L'Âme impériale, ou l'agonie de Messaline* (written around 1907, but published only in 1929) was an attempt to write a neoclassical



modernist drama in the Dannunzian vein, but from a female perspective. In its linking of female sexuality and seductiveness with political power and the excitability of the crowd, it resembles D'Annunzio's 1905 incendiary tragedy *La Nave* (which Canudo translated into French) except that in D'Annunzio's tragedy the heroine (Basiliola) commits suicide, while in Valentine's drama it is Messaline (the *incitatrice*) who triumphs.<sup>17</sup>

Valentine's passion for Nietzsche was linked to the way in which Nietzsche, despite his anti-woman prejudices, brought the body back into philosophy. Valentine's vision of her own body is both heterosexual and bisexual. Unlike other women rebels of the belle époque, who chose the lesbian as the symbol of the new woman, Valentine de Saint-Point's woman is the "strong" (and therefore "perverse") heterosexual woman, whose sexuality is coextensive with her creativity.<sup>18</sup> In her union with Canudo (from whom she declined to have a child) she pursued the ideal of the creative couple that Sibilla Aleramo also theorized in a different way. (A version of this ideal was embodied at the time by Sonia and Robert Delaunay, among others).

In her trilogy of novels, Valentine outlined the figure of a mother-son incestuous couple (inspired by Nietzsche's "mother in the son"), where the figure of the husband and father is effectively eliminated from the sexual and creative process. In an exact reversal of *Mafarka's* paradigm of womanless paternity (Valentine's third and final novel of the trilogy appeared in *La Nouvelle Revue* between December 1909 and March 1910) it is the mother who effectively "creates" a son without a father, though the son finally fails to incarnate the mother's heroic desire by betraying the incestuous bond after the mother's death.

## II. Valentine and Canudo

Although their backgrounds were quite different, Valentine and Canudo shared a deeply utopian ethos and an esthetic idealism that was typical of some prewar intellectual circles in Paris. Canudo, like D'Annunzio and Marinetti, was a versatile, "total" intellectual, open to all forms of esthetic expression and spectacle, though he lacked their cynicism and talent for self-promotion. Working as a critic and then as a translator, Canudo had moved to Paris in 1901, where he lived a precarious bohemian existence. He became an associate of Soffici's, met (among others) Joyce, Marinetti, Apollinaire, Marie Laurencin, and Edgar Varèse, and began writing in French magazines about Italian theatre and music, as well as lecturing and composing his own works for the theatre. One of his lectures, which he published as part of the collection *L'Âme de Dante*, was "Psychologie

Dantesque de la Luxure" and appears to have influenced Valentine's notion of *luxure* as a powerful spiritual force. During one of his Dante courses in 1910, he presented the new film adaptation of Dante's *Inferno* by Francesco Bertolini and Adolfo Padovan, a work that was pivotal in the literary and artistic legitimization of the new medium, usually considered mere entertainment for the masses rather than an art form.

Before focusing his attention on cinema, however, Canudo began thinking about the idea of a cosmopolitan Mediterranean culture—especially music and theatre—and, like Valentine, became particularly interested in the notion of a modern Mediterranean revival of the Greek open-air theatre tradition. The new theatre would combine music, images, dance, and drama in a total synthetic and cinematic spectacle. It was meant to be a Mediterranean answer to Wagner, similar to D'Annunzio's theatre of Albano as described in *Il Fuoco* and other French neo-Greek theatre projects at the time. Along with a group of other enthusiasts, Canudo started a society for this kind of theatre to be performed at Orage and wrote several works for it, including the symphonic tragedy *Le Délire de Clytemnestre* with music by Varèse.

Canudo also wrote novels, among which *La Ville sans Chef* (1910) a work that provides interesting evidence of Canudo's and Valentine's intellectual position vis-à-vis both Marinetti and D'Annunzio. The novel, which expresses in symbolic form many of the anxieties related to the new mass society and the urban and industrial crowds described in Gustave Le Bon's work, is the apocalyptic story of an anarchist, Vincent. Vincent is an idealist who believes in the possibility of creating a community made of free-thinking individuals without oppression, political demagogues, or leaders, but becomes alienated and disenchanted, finally learning to rely only on himself and to believe only in the creative individual (a position not unlike that of Boccioni's). Canudo shared with Marinetti and the futurists a profound interest in anarchism, but unlike Marinetti he believed in the need for a creative dialectic of tradition and innovation. Also unlike Marinetti, who sought to devalue sexuality at least symbolically, Canudo was interested in the fundamental intellectual and psychological function of human sexuality. Alluding to Nietzsche, he wrote: "La sexualité monte au faite de l'intelligence" (*L'Âme* 66). It was a view that he shared with both Valentine and D'Annunzio.<sup>19</sup>

In 1911, Canudo had joined *Méditerranée*, a monthly review of politics and literature "for a united federation of the Latin peoples," and in October of the same year he published his seminal, first essay on film theory, "La Naissance d'un sixième art." Later, he called cinema the seventh,

rather than the sixth art, for cinema represented the fusion of three arts of space—painting, architecture and dance—with three arts of time—music, theatre and literature (“Reflections on the Seventh Art” 296). In her own work, Valentine soon became aware of the need to go beyond traditionally-staged tragedy and to create a more cinematic kind of spectacle, her *Métachorie*. In 1912, Canudo founded with Mme Zekowaia and others the journal *Montjoie!* of which he became the full-time editor in chief from 1913 to 1914. Although subtitled “Organe de l’Impérialisme artistique français,” *Montjoie!* was essentially cosmopolitan in its approach and, according to the futurist painter Gino Severini, “even too open to everyone” (127). It published contributions by, among others, Léger, Stravinsky, Gordon Craig, Apollinaire, Max Jacob, Blaise Cendrars, Duchamp, Goncharova, and the Delaunays, but also writings by right-wing traditionalists such as Henri Clouard. Despite its nationalist pride and its ideas about cultural imperialism, the journal expressed dislike for *L’Action Française* (in the sixth issue of 1913 Vivian du Mas published an attack against Barrès) and placed itself rather on the “gauche libérale.”<sup>20</sup> Canudo, however, was against political action by artists and writers, and pursued instead the ideal of the independence of art. Ironically, like many young men and women of his generation in Europe, he was soon to be captivated by the myth of redemptive violence, one of the factors that led to interventionist idealism and contributed to World War One, of which, as we shall see, he became one of the most celebrated heroes and poets.

In 1914, *Montjoie!* launched its own movement, “Cerebrism.” The “Manifeste de l’art cérébriste” was published in *Le Figaro* on 9 February. Cerebrism was a kind of esthetic and avant-garde mystical utopianism based on the notion that all avant-garde artists should be able to overcome their differences (Valentine had distanced herself from futurism by then) and cooperate in forging a new polyphonic artistic soul for the world. Sensuality and intelligence, but not sentimentalism and emotion, were to be the essence of cerebrism.

De Saint-Point’s new dance, the “Métachorie” or “dance idéiste” was the embodiment in the theatre of the cerebrist credo that she contributed to create, giving it a theosophic slant. Neither mimetic nor anecdotal, Métachorie was designed, as we shall see, as an abstract form of dance, a stimulant for the intelligence and the imagination. Métachorie was envisioned as the equivalent in dance of cinema’s kinetic essence. Canudo conceived of cinema as a synthetic, anti-mimetic fusion of the spatial and the temporal dimensions; evocation, not imitation was to be the goal of filmic expression. Canudo’s theories were an important influence on avant-garde

European film-makers. He perceived cinema as a kind of visual symphony, a writing done with light and shadow, emphasizing the abstract visual aspect of the filmic image as well as the ability of cinema to defamiliarize and valorize details and objects, especially, through the close-up, the human face and other parts of the body and of physical movement. The point of the close-up was to exhibit the illusory quality of the familiar human face by making it strange and mysterious, paradoxically and poetically obscuring, hiding or disfiguring its familiar appearance. Through the cinema, the human perception of the body could lose its habitual, hackneyed predictability and become more complex and surprisingly revealing. Valentine's *Métachorie*, in which she often used the veil to obscure the face, had a similar goal.

The war put an end to Canudo's editorial and critical activities for a while and, eventually, his relationship with Valentine. He and Blaise Cendrars signed an appeal to all foreign friends of France to join in aiding the French. Canudo himself, who was not a French citizen, asked and was granted permission to join the Foreign Legion in a special regiment of volunteers organized and led by Peppino Garibaldi (a grandson of Giuseppe Garibaldi). This is not a mere historical detail, but rather an eloquent sign of the cross-national idealism that was at the root of Canudo's and others' desire to fight. Although the violence of World War One and the frustration that the war eventually generated were at the root of Mussolini's formation (and of what was to become the opportunism and ruthlessness of the fascist movement) to associate Canudo with fascism on the basis of his enthusiasm for Latin culture and his willingness to fight in what seemed a heroic war seems excessive and unwarranted. The myth of redemptive violence was as powerful on the right as it was on the left, and was hardly connected exclusively with fascism. However, it was precisely the spectacle of the reality of violence in the war (rather than the fantasy of violence, which could indeed be liberating) that led Valentine to revise entirely her pro-war position, while Canudo became a war hero and entirely committed to the heroic ethos of war for the duration of the conflict.

Canudo was decorated in 1915 for fighting valiantly in the Argonne as captain of a detachment of Italian volunteers. He was subsequently wounded and while he recovered in a hospital in Nice he wrote the first of his many war poems, which were well received and were awarded the Prix Montyon in 1917. In May of 1915, he received the news that Italy had joined the war and that the Garibaldi legion had consequently been dissolved. In Serbia, with the rank of Captain of the Italian army, he asked and obtained permission to fight with the French. In September 1915, he



embarked with the First Zouave regiment for the Dardanelles. He was wounded during the devastating December retreat, but refused to be evacuated. Before being reassigned to the Italian army in the Orient, he was stationed in Salonika, where during his stay in the military hospital he founded a new journal of art and literature, *Ça Ira*. In August of the same year, he visited Valentine in Barcelona before going back to the Greek front. In November, he received a silver medal for having rescued another captain, wounded during a reconnaissance beyond the enemy lines on the hills west of Monastir. Canudo fought valiantly for the rest of the war, was wounded and decorated again.

Canudo became a kind of wartime legend in his own lifetime, with performances about his life staged in Parisian theatres and war sites named after him. His relationship with Valentine ended during the war. In 1920 he met and later married a young professor of French, Jeanne Benoite Janin, who became Valentine's best friend and companion after Canudo's death.

After the war, until his death from malaria in 1923, Canudo devoted himself almost entirely to cinema. With Abel Gance, Germaine Dulac, and Jeanne Janin, he started a club for friends of the seventh art, writing film criticism and promoting film as an art throughout Europe, although he never abandoned the cause of "Latin culture" and was active in the "Union of the Mediterranean races of Europe, America, Asia and Africa." Canudo's concept of "race," however, was not ethnic or eugenic, but cultural.

### III. Marinetti and Sorel: the Myth of Violence

While after 1914 Canudo (like Marinetti) never explicitly questioned the heroism of violence and war, Valentine, who was fascinated by the myth of redemptive violence and by the futurists' belligerent language, by 1917 entirely rejected her earlier views. In order to understand how Valentine's encounter with futurism came about and the role that the myth of violence played in that encounter, it is important to understand Marinetti's position in Paris at the time, and his own particular take on the destructiveness of female lust.

When Valentine de Saint-Point wrote her first belligerent futurist manifesto in 1912, futurism had already produced a significant body of work and Marinetti was well-known and even notorious in Paris. Marinetti, who spoke, wrote, and even dreamt in French at the time, had published two collections of symbolist poetry (*La conquête des étoiles* and *Destruction*) and the novel *Mafarka le futuriste*. The work which most contributed, along with the "Founding and Manifesto of Futurism," to make



his reputation in France, however, was the play *Le Roi Bombance*, performed in Paris at the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre in 1909, shortly after the publication of the "Founding and Manifesto" in *Le Figaro*.

The protagonist of the play is "L'Idiot": the unheeded poet who, in contrast to the grossly materialist concerns of the politicians, hungers for the absolute and eventually dies from disgust and disillusionment. The work was a deliberate attempt to outrage, to offend, and to scandalize. It included a riot during which a mob lead by a socialist agitator storms and overtakes the royal castle, proceeding to devour and then vomit the body of the King.

The press called the piece barbaric and anti-French, and there was intense speculation as to the "real" identity of some of the characters, in whom some recognized allusions to actual socialist and anarchist agitators of the time. Marinetti was delighted by this reaction.<sup>21</sup>

In 1906, Georges Sorel's articles had begun appearing in *Mouvement Socialiste* and were eventually collected in book form under the title *Reflexions sur la violence* in 1908. For Marinetti and many others it was a revelation. Sorel provided a model for a form of modern heroism that could replace the obsolete and powerless romanticism of "L' Idiot." Like Marinetti, and like Valentine, Sorel had grown disenchanted with the demagoguery of French socialism, increasingly caught up in the seductions of parliamentary politics. Beginning to look elsewhere for an agent of regeneration, he developed the myth of heroic and aggressive action by a group of men bound together by fervent solidarity and motivated by a passionate confidence in the possibility of total change.

The exhilarating possibilities of this ethics of action, heroic sublimity and tribalist solidarity were at the core of the futurist movement and contributed to give it its initial impetus.<sup>22</sup> The futurist exaltation of violence (and also Valentine's own particular version of it) must be seen in the context of this passionate and rather idealistic and utopian ethic. Others were interested in the notion of violence elaborated by Sorel (Lenin for example, and certainly Mussolini), but had more practical or instrumental visions of its possible uses. In creating futurism, on the other hand, Marinetti embraced the Sorelian ethic of a group living in the midst of a continuous crisis and anticipating a future of radical transformation. Women, however, were initially excluded from the revolutionary group, which defined itself as essentially masculine and misogynist, thus effectively perpetuating the mentality of bourgeois patriarchy (as well as romantic and symbolist stereotypes).

In the first act of *Le Roi Bombance*, "L'Idiot" inveighs against the body of woman, which in his view is always "fatal" to man, and women are

expelled from the kingdom from the outset; they cannot easily be “digested,” in fact, due to their insatiable and uncontrollable lust (166-167). As far back as *La Conquête des étoiles*, the feminine principle in Marinetti’s work is negative and opposed to the positive masculine principle, alone capable of reaching the superior ideal symbolized by the stars. In the hallucinatory symbolist language of Marinetti’s poems, as in so many other literary texts of that period, female sexuality is repeatedly associated with abjection and destruction, and at the same time it is the object of extended sado-masochistic fantasies often linked to the image—both dreaded and desired—of engulfment or of the bad and the good mother.<sup>23</sup> “The Founding and Manifesto” of futurism, with its outspoken “mépris de la femme” did not substantially alter this vision of woman and female sexuality.

It was only through Valentine de Saint-Point that Marinetti’s awareness of the potential interest of women for futurism and, viceversa, of the ways in which futurism could benefit from launching different cultural and political models for women as well as for men, turned into something like a strategy.

#### IV. Valentine, Futurism and *Luxure*

It was in opposition to Marinetti’s expressions of misogyny, which had migrated seemingly unaltered into the futurist works, and by launching a defence of female lust, that Valentine de Saint-Point entered the futurist arena. On the occasion of the 1912 exhibition of futurist painting in Paris, Marinetti, Boccioni, Severini and other futurists had been invited to Valentine’s atelier for an evening of performance. “Le Vendeur de soleil” by Rachilde, who was in the audience, was performed, but Marinetti also declaimed one of Valentine’s poems, “Hymne au soleil.” A second evening of performance took place at Valentine’s atelier in June, with music by Ravel, Satie and Debussy, dances by Trouhanova, and a performance of Villier de l’Isle Adam’s *La Révolte*.

Impressed by Valentine, who had publicly declared her agreement with futurist principles but vehemently disputed the futurist devaluation of woman, Marinetti invited her to become the first futurist woman. In her letter of adhesion, Valentine claimed to have in her life and work foreshadowed futurism, but she (like Canudo) expressed disagreement with the futurist iconoclastic rage: past masterpieces should not be sacrificed to the new (*Manifeste* 9-10).

In March, between the two performance evenings, she wrote her “Manifeste de la femme futuriste,” which was published in June after she declaimed it in Brussels at the Galerie Giroux on the 3rd, in conjunction

with the traveling exhibition of futurist painting, and in Paris at the *salle Gaveau* on the 27th. Both events were advertised and animated by the futurists with their usual flair for controversy and noisy publicity. The Paris reading and debate were heated and members of the audience were so scandalized that the evening ended in chaos. Valentine herself was immediately branded as immoral and even homosexual by some.<sup>24</sup>

Her notoriety reached its peak when she attempted to clarify her ideas (which she felt had been distorted and misinterpreted by journalists) in the second manifesto, the one on lust, dated 11 January 1913. The liberatory sexual message was immediately picked up by *Lacerba's* Italo Tavalato—a futurist and one of the few open homosexuals at the time—who published his own “Glossa sopra il manifesto futurista della lussuria” on 13 March 1913. Tavalato read Valentine’s manifesto as a rehabilitation of desire in its multiple forms and as a critique of sexual moralism, including the century-long tradition of homophobia. Copies of Valentine’s manifesto had been delivered to *Lacerba* by Palazzeschi.

The manifestos were eventually translated into twenty-three languages. Saint-Point reading her manifestos became a feature of a futurist traveling performance in 1913 that was staged in art galleries, cabarets, and clubs throughout Europe, including London, Berlin, and Rotterdam. By the end of the year, however, Valentine had already cut herself off from futurism to pursue her own avant-garde dance project, *Métachorie*.

Many of the ideas in Valentine’s manifestos were derived directly from her previous work, though the rhetoric and form of the manifesto make their impact more powerful and less nuanced. Anticipating a theme that was later to gain wide currency in contemporary feminist theory, Valentine argued against biological essentialism, claiming that to divide humanity along gender lines on the basis of sexual difference is absurd inasmuch as it is neither an absolute nor a valid basis for differentiating among human beings. Not only do men and women alike partake of the masculine and the feminine in varying degrees across a spectrum of sexual roles and attitudes, but, according to Valentine, the feminine and the masculine themselves are relative categories, culturally and historically variable and subject to change, rather than a fixed binary opposition. For Valentine (as for, much later, Julia Kristeva) it is not the biological sex of a person, but the subject position he or she takes within a given cultural and social context that defines his or her identity and transgressive potential.

If women at present happen to be trapped by the traditional patriarchal roles and values denounced by Marinetti, it is not because these roles belong to them naturally or by instinct, Valentine argues in “Le manifeste

de la femme futuriste,” for women can also be virile warriors: “guerrières qui combattent plus féroceement que les mâles” (*Manifeste* 16). Valentine, however, sees the potential role of futurist women as that of undermining the present social order precisely from within the key institutions of patriarchy. Within the family, she argues, woman should become the sole ruler of her children, and only as long as the children need her protection. She should, furthermore, abandon those qualities of passivity and patience that have traditionally been assigned to her as the angel of the hearth. The role of wife should be abolished altogether, freeing woman from her subjection to man.

One of the most striking contentions of Valentine’s two manifestos, although couched in a rather melodramatic and hyperbolic language designed (in true futurist fashion) to shock the audience, was the notion that the libido or life-instinct is a sexually unmarked instinctual force active in both men and women, whose potential violence is also common to both sexes. Valentine cites the Amazons, the Biblical Judith, Cleopatra, Messalina, and Charlotte Corday—among others—as examples of female warriors capable of fighting more bravely than men (16). Furthermore Valentine, like Freud, argues that all human beings are essentially bisexual, and that “femininity” and “masculinity” are not “natural” or “proper” to either sex: both man and woman can partake of masculinity and femininity in different degrees (14).

Like Marinetti (and Freud to some extent) Valentine associates virility with war, conflict and aggression, and femininity with peace, mediation and non-violence (as well as intuition and imagination). She denies, however, that women are naturally, “by instinct” wise, peaceful, and “good” (17), thus implicitly rejecting the notion that women are inherently “feminine.” This is the core of her objections to Marinetti, who in his work had appeared to conflate women and the feminine. Furthermore, unlike Marinetti, she judges that both individuals and social groups in which masculinity predominates are unproductive and brutish. The present moment in her view sees an excess not of masculinity, however, but of femininity; Valentine thus concurs with Marinetti as well as Nietzsche, for whom femininity was also a marker of all that was deprecable in the fin-de-siècle.

A compensatory plunge into brutal force, according to Valentine, is what is needed in this excessively effeminate age. Yet no revolution can be accomplished without women; indeed, according to Valentine, women are potentially the most powerful agents of revolution. Within this revolutionary perspective, the suffragist feminist movement appears counterproductive. As is the case with Julia Kristeva’s notorious skepticism vis-à-vis



women's rights movements, Valentine was a feminist who did not believe in feminism as a political movement. According to Valentine, giving women the vote would normalize them and defuse their revolutionary potential, not, as Marinetti thought, produce a welcome disorder and destruction in the European parliamentary systems. Like Marinetti, Valentine is against the bourgeois family as the primary cell of conservatism and feels that sexual union should be separate from the rearing of children, who belong solely to the mother.

But it was the truly shocking last section of Valentine's manifesto that made her a precursor of the likes of Artaud and Bataille as well as that of more recent (and literal-minded) performance artists, such as Orlan and Gina Pane (though contemporary women's performances seem to tend to use violence almost exclusively masochistically). Here Valentine builds on her initial idea of woman as a potential warrior, taking it to an extreme that goes well beyond Joan of Arc and Charlotte Corday, women who were, after all, national heroines. War in Valentine's vision becomes a pleasurable form of extreme sadism, sublime because violently transgressive. She invokes mutilation of the enemy (a clear metaphor for castration) as a pleasurable and sublime act. Although Valentine, like some prominent contemporary Italian, French, and American feminists, recognizes maternity as an essential feature of womanhood, she is far from any sentimental vision of the maternal as inherently non-violent. On the contrary, for her procreation is yet another extreme act, for the life of the children is destined to be sacrificed in the carnage of war.

Given Marinetti's and the futurists' blatant misogyny, it has often appeared surprising and paradoxical that Valentine should have been attracted by futurism, that futurism should have enjoyed a notable success among women, and that later a considerable number of women intellectuals should have wished to become futurists themselves. To attribute this phenomenon to a form of collective female masochism, however, is both disingenuous and overly simplistic. Indeed, at least in the case of Valentine de Saint-Point, the opposite impulse was blatantly at work. She was attracted by the violence promised by futurism and she wished to partake in it not as an object but as a subject. This shamelessly "masculine," active and aggressive impulse (which placed Valentine de Saint-Point in a position similar to that of certain Greek heroines—Medea, Elektra, Clitemnestra—whom she admired) appears to be precisely what still makes Valentine disturbing and unacceptable to some of her critics.

What distinguishes Valentine's position most sharply from that of Marinetti, and the reason of the controversy that led her to write the sec-



ond manifesto, is her re-evaluation of female eros and sexual desire, which she calls *luxure*. The word, as we have seen, is reminiscent of Dante's *lussuria* as evoked by Canudo, but it also alludes to woman's sensual *luxé*, the fetishistic and narcissistic desire for expensive and beautiful ornamentation of the body.

In Valentine's rather Reichian view, however, *luxure* and the eroticism of the body are not associated principally with woman and the female body. Instead, *luxure* is the most potentially transgressive force in human existence for both men and women, who must become conscious of its psychology and value while freeing themselves from all forms of sentimental mystification and moralism. Female sexuality in particular does not have to be passive, hidden, or repressed, she argues in "Manifeste futuriste de la luxure." It can on the contrary be a source of strength and creative inspiration for women. In opposition to all the fin-de-siècle and belle époque stereotypes of female sexuality as primitive, uncontrollable, dangerous and animalistic, Valentine's notion of *luxure* as a creative force constitutes a significant reappropriation of female desire by a woman. Of all of Valentine's ideas, this was probably the most influential. It resonated deeply within futurism and we find variations of it in the work of Mina Loy, Enif Robert and Benedetta, among others.

Crucial in Valentine's argument is the notion that the traditional body/mind or body/spirit dichotomy which permeated traditional as well as much avant-garde art is untenable. The search for the unknown can be undertaken through the body (24). Indeed, there is an epistemological and spiritual dimension of the body, and of eroticism in its extreme forms, that has been ignored for too long. For Valentine, the flesh can be creative just like the spirit can, and neither is superior to the other. This argument's subtext is clearly the alignment of the body with the "inferior" feminine realm, in opposition to the superiority of male spirituality and creativity—an argument that dates back to Plato and subtends his praise of spiritual male homosexual love as superior to heterosexual love. Valentine, echoing Nietzsche, criticizes the Christian devaluation of the sensual body, its turning of *luxure* into a vice and a sin, and calls for an end to the repression of desire between two bodies, "whatever their sex" (27).

But it is not enough to ban all sentimentalism and pruderie (as advocated by Marinetti): *luxure* must be reflected on, it must become the domain of the intellect as well as the flesh, and even be shaped like a work of art, exalting the individuals' reciprocal sensibility and sensuality (28). Clearly, we are far from Marinetti's "contatti rapidi e disinvolti" as well as from his statement in "Against Love and Parliamentarism" (1910) that *lus-*

*suria* was as unnecessary as sentimentalism, coitus being needed only for the reproduction of the species. To Valentine, *luxure* must be as daring and experimental, as complex, dynamic, and visionary as avant-garde art itself. Like avant-garde art, *luxure* in this sense is the work of a visionary élite that promises to be liberatory for humanity as a whole. In its ever-renewed, perennially unappeased, and thus future-oriented movement—the movement of desire itself—Valentine's *luxure* becomes indeed a metaphor for the dynamic, violent spirit of the avant-garde ("la perpétuelle bataille j'aimais gagnée") if not of futurism *per se*.

The ultimate difference between Valentine and Marinetti is that the ideal futurist hero(ine) for Valentine is neither a man nor a woman, but an altogether new being who would challenge the hegemonic gender codes of the fin-de-siècle and the belle époque, as well as Marinetti's own misogynistic rhetoric. Just as Valentine was unable fully to accept and embrace futurism's literalization of war and the actual celebration of the carnage in which Canudo also took part, Marinetti was unable to accept the conceptual, symbolic violence of Valentine's idea of the androgyne, or female warrior.

Contrary to Monique Wittig (in whose 1969 utopian novel *Les guérillères* one can see substantial affinities not only with Valentine's ideas on women, but also with certain futurist narrative strategies) Valentine does not offer a militant exaltation of the supremacy of women. Valentine's notion of an exceptional being echos rather the classical topos of the androgyne which appeared often in her poetic texts,<sup>25</sup> and also fascinated Sibilla Aleramo and other women modernists and avant-gardists. Virginia Woolf's 1929 *A Room of One's Own* helped to make the androgyne one of the central concepts of the contemporary feminist debate on sexual difference. In France, the mythic figure of the androgyne emerged in the work of another, later lover of Nietzsche, the feminist theorist Luce Irigaray.

Like Virginia Woolf, Valentine de Saint-Point was interested in a new kind of "superior" subject with an emotional and intellectual range that included both male and female elements. And like Virginia Woolf, Valentine's deconstruction of sexual identity—despite its authentically feminist implications—prevented her from sympathizing with the reformist political position in the bourgeois feminist struggles of her day. However, Valentine's androgynous ideal is not (as Woolf's might have been) a way of repressing her ambition, and her condition as woman.<sup>26</sup> Nor is it certainly a way, as in Carolyn Heilbrun's work, to envision the possibility to free men from the compulsion to violence.

Valentine's androgynous ideal, which became important in her theory and practice of dance, was antithetical to the prevalent misogynist evolu-

tionist scenario and specifically to Darwin's notion that an androgynous being might have been a remote primitive progenitor of the whole invertebrate kingdom. Darwin's (and Weininger's) view was that the evolutionary division of the sexes led to the "natural" and progressive division of responsibilities whereby men acquired the superior evolutionary task of production and creativity, while women were confined to the more primitive and repetitive function of reproduction. This vision was also embraced by fascism, which considered all forms of crossed gender roles, androgyny or bisexuality, to be dangerous and sick. Valentine, on the contrary, however mindful of the classical and romantic myth, turns the androgyne into a future-oriented ideal. Her androgyne is neither a hybrid, primordial being split into male and female, nor (as in the romantic version), the primary male essence "completed" by the female essence.<sup>27</sup> Hers is a being ("Être") in whom—whatever his or her sex—the power and strength of both masculinity and femininity are combined in an unfixed, constantly (and historically) shifting dynamism. As such, the androgyne to Valentine, like Irigaray, can only be a state of mind, a way of thinking, feeling and constructing the reciprocal dialectic of body and mind, flesh and spirit.

### V. Meta-dance, Abstraction, Androgyny and Aridity

The dance spectacle that she named *Métachorie* (literally "Beyond the chorus") became the principal vehicle for Valentine's vision of the modernist androgyne. In her manifesto, "La Métachorie," Valentine explains that she takes "chorus" as a synonym of dance; thus hers is really a meta-dance. It goes beyond dance as traditionally conceived and, at the same time, it is a critical reflection on dance through dance. An early commentator, Henri Le Bret, further explains that *Métachorie* also defies the spirit of the Greek chorus, which was to express the crushing inevitability of Fate (30). One of the apparent inevitabilities that Valentine seeks to defy is precisely that of an essential sexual difference between man and woman. Although she is a female performer, she rejects the traditional association between the dancing body and feeling, passion, intuition, the heart, nature, and spontaneity as embodied especially by Isadora Duncan, who had famously danced naked on the stage, seeking to incarnate the eternal essence of woman.<sup>28</sup> In *Métachorie*, Valentine seeks to reject the mythical spontaneity, naturalness and femininity of eroticism, taking eroticism itself to a higher level of abstraction where the traditional borders between body and mind, and female and male, are called into question.

Valentine also rejects mimesis, imitation and pantomime (however stylized) and any movement that might suggest a realistic imitation or copy

of life or nature. Loïe Fuller, probably the most famous dancer of the belle époque, excelled in the art of imitating flowers, butterflies, and moths, partly through the help of vast quantities of fabric and gauze in her stunning billowing costumes. Marinetti and prominent futurists such as Balla and Severini admired her innovative use of light, which expanded rhythmical movement and the dance's dynamism beyond the natural confines of the body. Her diaphanous costumes however, tended to reveal rather than hide the body, creating the effect of a fusion of the sensuous female form with the natural being she imitated. In positivist culture of course, woman was supposed to be naturally imitative as well as closer to nature; hence her inferiority in comparison to man, who was thought to be more rational and abstract. It is an opposition that keeps resurfacing stubbornly even within the avant-garde, and especially in the work of abstractionists such as Mondrian and Kandinsky.

In contrast to both Duncan and Fuller, Valentine's theory requires that the body and face of the dancer be veiled. The function of the veil (or mask) is not only to de-personalize and de-naturalize the body, but also to de-feminize it at times, making it more ambiguous and abstract. The details of the face and of the body must remain hidden so that only the essential lines of the body's movement and rhythm are visible. Veiling or masking the face in particular prevents the illusion of being able to decipher the dance on the basis of visual expression, the "natural" reflection of feeling and emotion in the face. In "La Métachorie," Valentine is also critical of classical ballet and of the way the ballerina, in her esthetic positions, is supposed to recall and represent a classical vision of beauty. In classical ballet, Valentine feels, movement is only a connecting link between beautiful positions, while she wishes to make movement itself significant.

In a formulation that shows the futurist influence on her, she not only stresses the essential importance of movement for modern art, but emphasizes also the need for precision. (Violence and precision were the key components of the quintessential futurist art of the manifesto, as Marjorie Perloff has shown). One cannot dance intuitively and rhythmically, following the spontaneous lead of the body as it follows music. Nor should dance be subordinated or accessory to music. Dance must be an exactly calculated and choreographed, disciplined set of movements that embody an idea or vision. In this case, such an idea or vision is not a Platonic essence, but an interpretation of a series of poems written by Valentine herself. The dance does not illustrate the poem in any way, however, but rather offers through movement an interpretation of its meaning. The dance is the "plastic expression of the spirit and of the movement of the psyche"



that subtend each poem (53). The dance thus becomes a kind of abstract, interpretive and figural writing that coincides with the poem's reading.

The exactly calculated and choreographed dance is in fact only one element of the spectacle of *Métachorie*, that includes the reading of poems from off-stage by an actor (a kind of disembodied, abstract voice) music, and light projections of colours and geometrical shapes. Valentine envisions *Métachorie* as a synthesis of music, poetry, dance, and geometry. Geometry for her stands also, partly but not exclusively through perspective, as a figure for architecture, painting, and sculpture. Her statement on the centrality of geometry brings to mind the role of sacred geometry in certain forms of abstraction, for example in Mondrian (but also in futurism, as for example in Balla) where it is connected to theosophical ideas. Such an esoteric connection is also implicit in Valentine, though without the essentialist underpinnings in terms of gender that are present in Mondrian.<sup>29</sup> The basic abstract geometrical shapes drawn by the moving body are the line, the square, the circle, the cone, and the spiral, each with its rich background of esoteric connotations. For Valentine, the face and body must be veiled, and sexuality spiritualized and shaped by the intellect.<sup>30</sup> Foreshadowing her interest in Islam, Valentine's veiled face and body and the geometric patterning of her choreographies suggest the traditional Islamic rejection of the figure and of mimesis in favour of refined and intricate abstraction.

The reactions to Valentine's first dance performance, which took place on 20 December 1913 at the Comédie des Champs Élysées and was introduced by a reading of her manifesto by a male actor, were contradictory. Some felt that Valentine's dance had an excessively athletic, masculine muscular quality, others that the dancer seemed naked under her feminine diaphanous tulle.<sup>31</sup> Günter Berghaus perceptively remarks that the second impression was probably an effect of the lighting. However, what the reviews seem to point to is really the gender ambiguity of the performance, as well as its unusual complexity, and the difficulty involved in deciphering it.

The performance was articulated in four interconnected parts, each of which corresponded to a series of Valentine's own poems that were read offstage by a male actor: poems of love, atmospheric poems, pantheistic poems, and war poems. Each was accompanied by a different music: Florent Schmitt's "*La guerre dans les airs*," Debussy's "*Demoiselle élue*," Satie's "*Les pantins dansent*" and "*Hymne au soleil*," and, probably, the futurist Balilla Pratella's "*La guerra*." (Pratella's music had been commissioned by Marinetti in 1912 specifically to accompany Valentine's war poem).<sup>32</sup>



Valentine's costumes for the first performance were designed by Vivian du Mas and must therefore be seen in a theosophical context as well. They were of three different kinds: Greek-like robes and drapings with flowing and diaphanous multi-colored tulles, simple, almost severe orientalist costumes, and martial-looking costumes with Merovingian details such as the plumed helmet mentioned by Marinetti in the highly critical "Manifesto della danza futurista" of 8 July 1917. While the most clearly androgynous costume was the last, which made Valentine appear like a phantasmagorical warrior, the series of dances was apparently meant to be seen as a conflicting and dynamic whole. Each dance evokes a possible gender position as well as a historical moment, in a homage to both the national past and Valentine's personal past—however modernistically reinterpreted—that could only be anathema to futurism.

In his 1917 critique of Valentine's *Métachorie*, Marinetti denounced the "aridity" of Valentine's excessively abstract, cold, and cerebral style and objected to the dancer's wearing of an oriental veil and a warrior-like, plumed helmet (*Teoria* 146-147). Such a critique is effectively equivalent to accusing Valentine of being unfeminine. Aridity (a term also used by Locke 74)<sup>33</sup> is but another word for frigidity here, the inability to feel and give pleasure as a woman; and the plumed helmet represents yet another usurpation of the phallus. As for the oriental veil, its symbolism is doubly heretical: on the one hand it hides the feminine body that futurism wishes to control and even expropriate, making it unavailable and abstract, on the other hand the veil evokes the very same decadent and orientalist feminine sensuality that futurism wished to eradicate and supplant. For Valentine, the veil represents a personal, symbolic connection with Lamartine's Orient, even as the Orient had increasingly become for many nationalists—for example Barrès—a sign of everything that was dangerously corrupting and alien to the spiritual health of France. Later in her life, Valentine would actually experience the political complexities of veiling in a colonial and Muslim context. Most heretical from a futurist viewpoint, however, is the copresence of those two symbols—the masculine plumed helmet and the feminine oriental veil—and the symbolic oscillation between the two. It is this androgynous oscillation that makes Valentine unacceptable to Marinetti.

While Marinetti initially welcomed Valentine and was even influenced by her in some ways, he was not yet ready for a female warrior. As feminized and androgynous as some futurist heroes and images are—including the maternal Mafarka and Boccioni's pregnant "Materia"—and as important a role the "feminine" body, matter, and intuition had for futurism in

charting its transgressive course, the figure of the abstracted, “masculinized,” strong erotic woman still remained excessive and intolerable.

For Marinetti, futurist dance had to glorify male heroism and man’s symbiosis with the machines of speed and war. Conventional notions of choreography and all harmonious motions traditionally considered to evoke beauty, seductiveness, eroticism, and sentiments in dance and ballet were to be abolished and replaced by a new kind of anti-esthetic and asexual performance. Unlike *Métachorie*, futurist dance was to be not abstract, but rather representational and mimetic.<sup>34</sup>

## VI. Goodbye to All That

During the war, Valentine worked for the Red Cross. She also taught her theory and practice of dance to a small group of male students that was soon called to war and devastated by casualties. It was an experience that led to a radical change of perspective, making her, unlike Canudo, very critical of the war. Although she continued to see in the unavoidable violence of war a kind of terrible and creative beauty (thus still subscribing to an essential part of futurist esthetics), she increasingly came to consider the war a plot fomented by greed and hate. She felt that the individual had been reduced from human being to mere instrument. The act of veiling or masking the face in *Métachorie* thus took on an added significance for Valentine because, as she told Djuna Barnes, “it is the face and the words that issue from the mouth that make all the wars and all the racial disputes. Covered, nothing would stand in the way of the symbolic beauty of the individual conception of life” (Barnes 230). The interview with Djuna Barnes came out in April 1917, only a few months before the publication of Marinetti’s resentful “Manifesto of Futurist Dance.” Valentine’s performance of *Métachorie* (her last) at the Metropolitan Opera in New York on the very day of the United States’ entrance into the war was actually a farewell of sorts to her old self.<sup>35</sup> Valentine spent the remainder of the war in Morocco and once again she began studying theosophy seriously. At the age of forty-two she converted to Islam, adopting yet another name: Rawhiyya Nouredine.

Most critics have interpreted Valentine’s conversion and her subsequent move to Egypt in 1924 as a defeatist “dropping out” of the civilized world.<sup>36</sup> Others have seen it as a decidedly reactionary and anti-feminist turn in her life (Bentivoglio 15). As Zouari has shown, however, after the war Valentine actually first moved to Corsica, where she started an association, the “Collège des Elites,” to promote the joint efforts of cultural elites in the West and the Orient to foster a spiritual rebirth and a common,

cooperative Mediterranean culture based on fraternity rather than exploitation and materialism. This valiant five-year effort collapsed in the face of scepticism, prejudice, and reciprocal suspicion that divided Muslims from non-Muslims. Even then, Valentine did not give up, but chose to direct her energy elsewhere.

Approaching fifty, Valentine moved to Cairo with Jeanne Canudo and Vivian du Mas. The two women worked as journalists and took part in discussions with the Egyptian feminist union (EFU), a diverse group of West-oriented Arabic and European women founded in 1924 by Huda Shaarawi, a highly-educated, charismatic upper-class woman who spoke French as well as Arabic. Seeking to combine European and Islamic feminism, Shaarawi traveled to international feminist conferences (including the 1923 meeting of the International Alliance for Women in Rome) and, like Valentine, was a supporter of Egyptian nationalism and later pan-Arabism. Shaarawi had been brought up in a harem, yet she argued that Islam granted women equal rights and that the Koran had been misinterpreted. Upon her return from the Rome conference she caused an uproar by appearing unveiled. Due to the ambiguous symbolic value of the veil, however, the EFU did not make unveiling a feminist issue (Shaarawi 35-44). Veiling (a practice shared by many Jewish, Christian and Islamic women in the urban centres of early twentieth-century Egypt) was in fact almost a female status symbol connected, like the harem and other means of female privacy and spatial seclusion, more to wealth and class than to religion (rural women went unveiled and poor women wore the veil only to go out). Veiling was indeed not required by the Koran, yet in European colonial rhetoric it was widely associated with Islam and taken as a sign of its inferiority and barbarism.<sup>37</sup> Female self-veiling, practiced by Valentine herself, could thus be construed as an anti-colonial and paradoxically feminist gesture.

Valentine became increasingly sceptical of the Western (and specifically French) orientation of Egyptian feminism, which she found too conservative. She argued that the feminist movement in France was a failure because, in contrast to Germany and England (where suffragism had been far more radical and violent), women had been unable to gain the vote. She was ostracized by the moderate EFU because she openly advocated an alternative, Islamic model. In seeking modernization, Valentine felt, Islamic women should not mimic the French, for this would only lead to defeat and to the loss of their traditional identities and backgrounds.<sup>38</sup>

Valentine's position in Cairo was made more difficult by her unconventional private life. Her lover, Fouad Nared (a poet and journalist who

was the son of a British diplomat) was considerably younger than she was. Even more worrisome to the colonial elite, however, was Valentine's strange ménage with a man and a woman, Vivian du Mas and Jeanne Canudo, and their mysterious theosophic dealings.

In the mid-to-late 1920s, Valentine wrote consistently in support of the "Egypt for the Egyptians" movement and pan-Arab nationalism in her journal *Le Phoenix*, subtitled "Organe de la Renaissance Orientale." The title of the journal is doubly significant. In alluding to the mythical bird reborn from the ashes of its former self, it points to the imminent metamorphosis and rebirth of the colonial territories. At the same time, it evokes Valentine's own capacity for intellectual rebirth and metamorphosis, and her interest in androgyny (the phoenix, a key symbol of theosophy, was both male and female). The journal was read especially in Syria and Lebanon, where it was often censored. With Jeanne Canudo and du Mas, Valentine founded a "Circle idéiste," which promoted children's literacy and a pedagogy based on theosophic principles. At the circle, which was open to Syrian nationalists, she lectured on the bankruptcy of Western civilization and the faults of European colonialism, bitterly criticizing the French atrocities in Syria and the bloody repression of the anti-French Druze revolt of 1925-1927. Accused of disloyalty by the French legation, Jeanne Canudo and du Mas were expelled from Cairo and returned to live in France. Only Valentine was allowed to remain, probably to spare an embarrassment to her ex-husband, the minister Charles Dumont.

In Cairo in the early 1930s Valentine met one last time with Marinetti, who was traveling through his native Egypt with his wife Benedetta. A reception in honour of Marinetti was organized by the Egyptian futurist of Italian and Austrian descent Nelson Morpurgo, who invited Valentine. In an interview, many years later, Morpurgo—who was one of the most prominent lawyers in the Italian colony in Cairo—recalled Valentine dressed and made up in an outrageous, incongruous way that looked to him like a grotesque masquerade (and was the antithesis of Benedetta's understated, elegant style). Apparently though, the older woman was still fascinating and had by then assumed such a mythic status as part of futurism's heroic and erotic past that Benedetta resented her presence and, losing her usual poise, made her feelings clear to the host and to her husband.<sup>39</sup>

Valentine's last known published work was a collection of poems, *La Caravane des chimères* (1934). Towards the end of her long nomadic life, Valentine lived in rue Imad Eddine in Cairo, occasionally practicing acupuncture and "radiesthésie." In Cairo society she was rumored to be (like the femme fatale in the futurist film *Thaïs*) a magician with occult



powers. Having spent all her money (most of which ironically appears to have come from the divorce settlement with Dumont) on *Le Phoenix*, Valentine became disillusioned with politics and withdrew into a contemplative, ascetic life until her death in 1953, the year of the declaration of Egyptian independence from colonial rule.

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup>See for example Macciocchi 121, Blum 105-106, Spackman 37-40, Bentivoglio 14-15 and Lyon 149-150. Valentine's manifestos have been republished and can be found in de Saint-Point, *Manifeste*.

<sup>2</sup>See for example Locke. For a more balanced view, see Franko.

<sup>3</sup>Zouari wrote her dissertation on Valentine de Saint-Point, on which she based a biography written in the form of a documentary novel, *La Caravane des chimères*. Zouari is also the author of the essay *Pour en finir avec Shahrarazade*, a feminist critique of Orientalism. Zouari's interest in Valentine stems from Valentine's own interest from the mid-1920s in the feminist and nationalist movements in Egypt. The biography by Richard de la Fuente also offers a useful account of Valentine's years in Egypt.

<sup>4</sup>Lamartine (1790-1869) was one of the most famous French romantic poets, intellectuals, travelers, and statesmen, author of the autobiographical *Méditations poétiques* (1820) and of the hugely popular *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses* (1830). After a journey to Egypt, Syria and Morocco chronicled in *Voyage en Orient* (1835), he was elected to the chamber of deputies and wrote celebrated essays about universal peace and the freedom of the press. His *History of the Girondists* (1847) foreshadowed the 1848 revolution. That year, he gained a post in the republican government as minister of foreign affairs, but his political activities ceased entirely after the coup d'état by Napoleon III. Valentine commemorated Lamartine's role in 1848 in an early poem, "Lamartine," in *Poèmes d'orgueil* 107-109.

<sup>5</sup>This is the spelling used by Zouari, though a variety of other spellings are adopted by different scholars.

<sup>6</sup>See especially *Nomadic Subjects*. Neither here nor in the later *Metamorphoses*, however, does Braidotti seem to be aware of the ways in which the theme of nomadic, transformative subjectivity emerges in the work of avant-garde women artists such as Valentine and (in a different way) Rosa Rosà, author of the futurist novel *Una donna con tre anime* (1919).

<sup>7</sup>Divorce had been reintroduced in France in 1884, but there was no mutual consent clause. By law, the husband's adultery was punished with a fine, while the punishment for women was imprisonment. Furthermore, women were still sub-



ject to marital authorization. They gained legal control of their own earnings and finances, including divorce settlements, in 1907.

<sup>8</sup>See *Feminisms* and Waelti-Walters, *Feminist Novelists*. The latter includes a useful discussion of Valentine's novels.

<sup>9</sup>On sartorial female fetishism, see Apter. See also de Lauretis 273-274. Unlike Apter, who regards female fetishism as compensatory for any kind of deeply-felt loss, de Lauretis argues that female fetishism and masquerade are inseparable from the specifically sexual castration complex.

<sup>10</sup>Later yet though, in *Una sensibilità italiana nata in Egitto*, Marinetti nostalgically recalled Valentine's elegance at the time of the 1912 performance of her "Manifeste futuriste de la luxure," describing Valentine's luxurious real pearls, the sumptuous elegance of her silver shoe (fetishistically evoked in the singular) and "the most beautiful foot in the world" (288).

<sup>11</sup>The lecture, entitled "L'Œuvre du sculpteur Rodin," was delivered at the Université Populaire on 25 January. See Lista 56.

<sup>12</sup>See for example Cottington 191. Dotoli's work on Canudo, somewhat apologetic in tone, is very useful; see especially *Lo scrittore totale*. See also *Canudo*.

<sup>13</sup>Valentine lectured on contemporary literature and women at the Maison des Etudiants in Paris on 25 May 1911, and on women in the theatre at the Université Populaire du Fabourg Saint-Antoine in Paris on 2 December 1912.

<sup>14</sup>See Guglielminetti.

<sup>15</sup>See Locke's reading (80-81) of the scene in *L'Orbe pâle* in which the female protagonist dreams of killing with her sword an Arab man who, like all men of all races and all religions, presumes to possess her sexually.

<sup>16</sup>On the development of Freud's notion of penis envy, see Laplanche and Pontalis 303-304.

<sup>17</sup>D'Annunzio's tragedy was a flop on stage mainly as a result of an inadequate cast and production, but later it was made into two successful films by Eduardo Bencivenga in 1912 and by Gabriellino D'Annunzio in 1921.

<sup>18</sup>On the psychoanalytic dimensions of "perverse desire" and the limits of the notion of the "masculinity complex" to define both lesbians (and, I would add, certain heterosexual women), see de Lauretis.

<sup>19</sup>Besides *La Nave*, Canudo translated into French the tragedy *Fedra*, and wrote screen adaptations for several of D'Annunzio's plays and novels. D'Annunzio was unhappy with both the translations and the screen adaptations however, perhaps because he felt that Canudo was infringing on his territory and taking too large a role in the Latin/Mediterranean revival movement.

<sup>20</sup>See the front-page editorial, "Gauche libérale," by Divoire.

<sup>21</sup>For Marinetti's account of the performance and the various reactions, see *La grande Milano* 80-84 and 279-287.

<sup>22</sup>In 1910 in Naples Marinetti gave a speech entitled "Bellezza e necessità della violenza" that is clearly and directly inspired by Sorel.

<sup>23</sup>On the conflictual figurations of the mother in *Mafarka*, see Spackman 52-76.

<sup>24</sup>See Cannistraro and Sullivan 101-102, where it is reported that Diego Rivera believed Valentine de Saint-Point to be having a lesbian affair with Margherita Sarfatti. For a description of Valentine's performance and the ensuing chaos, see Severini 117-118.

<sup>25</sup>See for example the poem "Être." On the theme of the androgyne in Valentine, see Dotoli 173-175. Canudo was also fascinated by the theme of the androgyne and published a series of sonnets inspired by it in *Poesia* (1906-07).

<sup>26</sup>This critique of Woolf appears in Showalter 264.

<sup>27</sup>On the romantic version of the androgyne, see Weil 63-72.

<sup>28</sup>For a comparison between Isadora Duncan and Valentine, see Franko 21-24.

<sup>29</sup>On Mondrian's essentialism, see Cheetman.

<sup>30</sup>Although he initially welcomed them as a form of almost cinematic spectacle, Ricciotto Canudo criticized the commercialism of the Ballets Russes in *Montjoie!* 7, 16 May 1913. See Cottington 191.

<sup>31</sup>See Berghaus. The article gives an overall account of the reviews.

<sup>32</sup>There is some question as to whether Pratella's music was actually used in this performance, as no reviewer mentions it. See Berghaus 30 and 42.

<sup>33</sup>Locke goes on to conclude in fact that Valentine's work has "no real feminine enjoyment, no female *jouissance*" (91).

<sup>34</sup>The actual futurist practice of choreography, dance, and performance in the 1920s and 1930s was very rich and complex, and included a variety of brilliant avant-garde experiments with abstraction, "mechanical" ballet, pantomime, and aerial dance that went well beyond the limited parameters of Marinetti's manifesto. For an overview centered on the figure of the famous futurist dancer Giannina Censi, see the essays collected in *Giannina Censi*.

<sup>35</sup>On the Metropolitan opera performance, see Satin.

<sup>36</sup>See for example Dotoli 171: "sconfitta . . . lascia l'Europa e va a vivere fra i fumi dell'Oriente, in Egitto, dove morirà nel 1953." In fact, a number of disenfranchised French intellectuals converted to Islam and moved to Islamic countries after the First World War. One of them was André Guénon, who was once an acquaintance of Valentine's in Paris and became one of her few friends during her Egyptian period. Guénon, whose complex traditionalist, anti-modernist and occultist thought was coopted by Julius Evola and later by the esoteric fascist movement, died in Cairo in 1951.

<sup>37</sup>For example Lord Cromer, British consul general in Egypt from 1883 to 1907 (and a notorious anti-suffragist at home) often pointed to veiling as a symptom of the degradation of women and the most obvious sign of Islam's inferiority to Western civilization (Ahmed 151).

<sup>38</sup>Even in this, Valentine anticipated aspects of contemporary feminism. For a discussion of Islamic feminism as an alternative to imported European models, see Ahmed.

<sup>39</sup>The interview is in Lambiase and Nazzaro 112-114. Morpurgo states that the reception took place in 1938, but the most likely year is 1930. Marinetti and Benedetta's trip to Egypt is documented in the series of Marinetti's narrative fragments published in installments by *La Gazzetta del Popolo* in 1930 and later collected in the volume *Il fascino dell'Egitto* (1933), now included in *Teoria*.

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NARRATING A PARTISAN BODY:  
AUTOBIOGRAPHIES OF CARLA CAPPONI AND  
GIOVANNA ZANGRANDI

On June 30th, 1946, *L'Unità* published a short story "La ragazza se ne va con Diavolo" by Marcello Venturi. The story opens with the image of Diavolo (a *repubblicino* sergeant), sitting on his motorcycle, smoking a cigarette, and waiting for a girl to show up. When Vera appears at a distance, Diavolo notices the attention she gets from a group of soldiers and he is stricken by her attractiveness ("gli sembrò ancora più carina," 201). The narrator's gaze passes from Diavolo to Vera who is staring pensively at a big German pistol hanging from Diavolo's belt. After his reassurance that he will not hurt her, she mounts his motorcycle. Diavolo turns back to look at her knees and they take off. When they reach a tree-lined alley, Diavolo turns off the engine and sits by Vera's side on the grass. He puts a hand on her knees. Vera asks him to take off the pistol and put it away because its sight scares her. When he does it, she tells him that she has heard of a certain Diavolo who has killed many partisans (*banditi*). Diavolo tries again to touch her knees, boasting of the three men he hanged himself only last week. Taking his hand between hers, Vera praises his strength and asks him to let her hold the pistol and show her how to shoot. While Diavolo instructs Vera how to press the trigger, she points the pistol at him and telling him that she is a partisan on a military mission, she shoots him right in the eyes. Two shots reverberate through the air and Vera calmly attaches the pistol to her own belt.

Venturi's story provides a perfect opening for the argument of my paper because it raises the question of gender within the partisan experience. It makes a woman's body the key element of the plot, the force which builds up the suspense and carries the narration towards its final resolution—Diavolo's assassination.<sup>1</sup> Since the success of Vera's mission depends solely on her ability to seduce him without raising any doubts as to her intentions, Vera has to play out a sexual fantasy. As an object of male desire, Vera's body fulfills social expectations and conforms to the common perception that a young, attractive woman would naturally seek and respond

to male attentions. But Vera, as the story shows, is not merely a passive body, she is a partisan who deftly orchestrates a sequence of events to carry out her assignment.

Venturi's narration reenacts the tension between two images of Vera—the woman and the partisan—through a series of gazes which switch back and forth between Diavolo and Vera. Diavolo's gaze follows the movements of her body as he sees her at a distance, joins the appreciative attention of the soldiers (a proof of his good taste in women), and rests on Vera's knees—a promise of an easy conquest. Vera's gaze, in contrast to her words (“*Mi piacciono gli uomini forti come te*”, 201), follows only the movements of the pistol, the main object of her interest. From the passivity of their gazes, the narration moves into action: Diavolo touches her knees, hands her the pistol, again tries to make a pass at her but at that moment, Vera, the object of his attention, becomes a subject who takes control of the situation—“*guardò Diavolo diretto negli occhi e puntando la rivoltella verso di lui lo uccise con due colpi*” (201).

The turning point of the story is the moment when Vera gets hold of the pistol, a symbol of phallic power and an attribute of a male soldier: “*Estrasse dalla fondina la grossa pistola e tolse la sicurezza. Sembrò ancora più grossa, l'arma nel pugno piccolo e secco di Vera*” (201). Vera's gesture—taking possession of a man's pistol (huge and naked without its sheath) functions on two levels; on a psychological level it evokes a Freudian fear of emasculation; on a social level it upsets the stereotype of power relations and signifies the transfer of power from a man to a woman. The incongruity of that transfer is apparent in the contrast between the size of the pistol and the smallness of Vera's dry hand. Since sweat is associated with nervousness, the dryness of Vera's hand emphasizes her self-assurance and lack of fear. She executes the fascist without a trace of emotion. The final act—attaching Diavolo's pistol to her own belt—signals Vera's transformation from a passive object into an active agent. The look of shock and disbelief on Diavolo's face at the moment of his death reflects the conflict between his perception of Vera (an attractive and submissive feminine body meant to fulfill his sexual desires) and the real Vera (in Italian Vera means “true”), a female partisan who undertakes a risky mission and brings it to completion. Diavolo sees Vera only through a lens of a social and cultural stereotype, never doubting its validity. That false perception is a fatal mistake which costs him his life.

Venturi's fictionalized account of a partisan experience reflects a split in the representation of female body into an object (a social construct) and a subject (a physical self, conscious of its own agency).<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, it breaks off without allowing us to follow the effects of that split on Vera's

sense of identity and to pursue further inquiry into the complex reality of being a woman partisan. When was the body of a partisan gendered? Were there any circumstances which rendered sexual differences insignificant? How did women partisans themselves confront the gendered reality of the Resistance? In a sense, the autobiographical narratives of Carla Capponi and Giovanna Zangrandi are a continuation of Vera's story, thus providing us with a context to explore these questions.

## I

Carla Capponi's autobiography *Con cuore di donna; L'otto settembre, via Rasella, la guerra partigiana: i ricordi di una protagonista*, was published only in the year 2000, that is, over half a century after the end of the war. Capponi was a member of a communist division of GAP (Gruppi di Azione Patriottica), paramilitary units under the command of the National Liberation Committee (CLN—Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale) during the Nazi occupation of Rome between September of 1943 until its liberation by the Allied Forces in June of 1944. Capponi's autobiography consists of two parts: the first dedicated to her childhood and adolescence, and the second to her involvement in the partisan activities. The first part focuses on the social and familiar background to explain reasons for her political beliefs and convictions, drawing a portrait of a girl whose transformation into a woman partisan we will witness in the second part.

While the first part of Carla's autobiography lingers on descriptions of sentiments and feelings, providing the reader with an insight into Carla's mind and her familial background, the second part—the partisan experience reflects the new awareness of her body and the part it will play in Carla's clandestine life. When Carla decides to become actively involved in the Resistance, she perceives herself as a dedicated patriot whose gender should not count in the fight for her country. To her mother's objection: "Ma sei matta! Ma che ci va a fare una donna? Quell'invito è rivolto agli uomini," Carla responds: "Donne e uomini saremo tutti utili" (96). And yet, as she soon discovered, the fact that she is an attractive young woman, in other words, a body full of sexual appeal, predisposes her for certain activities and limits the scope of her assignments. Her commanding officers send her on missions which require constant display of sexual attractiveness: "Secondo loro (i compagni dei GAP), dovevamo limitarci a mascherare la loro presenza, nei luoghi degli attacchi fingendo di essere le fidanzate: erano convinti che, così, avrebbero corso meno rischi" (125). Carla and other young women are to act as girl-friends or fiancées of partisans during preparatory stages of bomb attacks in public places or assassination plots against Nazi officials. A young couple in love, whispering

love-words, embracing in a public place could pass unobserved even under strict Nazi surveillance.

To project that sexual body, Carla adopts a new persona with a code-name, Elena, after Helen of Troy, a symbol of feminine attraction and an object of male desire. Her personality undergoes a dramatic change. The shy and unassuming Carla of the past is replaced by Elena, talkative and flirtatious, a talented actress. Carla's narration of that persona reflects a detachment, a distance, as if she were observing herself through a stranger's eyes: "da quando il barbiere Usiello mi aveva tinto, tagliato e arricciato i capelli, avevo un aspetto curato e piacevole, capace di risvegliare negli uomini il famoso gallismo italiano" (232). Fulfilling her commanders' orders, Carla quickly learns to use her body and her femininity to get out of compromising situations, often managing to avoid imprisonment and sometimes death. Her body becomes an ally in risky operations, a source of bravado and reassurance.

Carla recounts in detail one such deadly encounter: during a women's demonstration before military barracks where the Nazis hoarded men caught in street round-ups to be later sent to camps of forced labor in Germany, Carla was caught in the middle of a fight against Nazi and fascist soldiers with a gun in one hand, anti-fascist manifestoes in another, and no documents. She managed to pass the gun to her co-partisan, Marisa Musu, and felt her slip something into her pocket, just before three militia soldiers, kicking and beating her up brought her to a small office in the prison barracks. Left alone, she checked the piece of paper slipped into her pocket and discovered it to be an ID of a fascist group "Onore e combattimento," issued in the name of Marisa Musu. Armed with a false identity, Carla decided to play her 'attractive and innocent girl' card. When a fascist official entered the room, Carla registered his surprised reaction: "pensava di trovarsi di fronte una popolana e invece ero una ragazza vestita ancora decentemente" (202). Acting on an impulse of mutual attraction, ("era un bel ragazzo, alto, magro, la divisa tenuta in ordine," 203) Carla made up a convincing story of being mistaken for a partisan while, as a good fascist, she was only trying to calm down a crowd of furious women; to prove her point, she fished out the party ID. Her body language communicated the willingness to accept his attentions: "i nostri occhi si incontrarono e capii che gli piacevo; puntai tutto su quell'impressione, lo sentivo disponibile. Guardò l'orologio e d'improvviso mi disse: 'Se permette, le posso riconsegnare personalmente la tessera dopo il controllo, dove lei vuole.' 'Bene vediamoci a piazza Colonna, dove c'è la sede del partito'" (203). Of course, she never intended to keep her promise.



The same episode appears in Marisa Musu's autobiography *La ragazza di via Orazio*, published in 1997, that is, three years before Capponi's. Musu's text, however, tells a very different story. According to Musu, Carla was apprehended by two fascists and taken to the fascist headquarters. Musu was terrified:

Mi rendo conto che la vita di Carla non vale più un soldo, perché sarà subito perquisita e le troveranno la rivoltella, e penso rapidamente cosa posso fare. Mi ricordo che ho ancora il tesserino di 'Onore e combattimento' e lo mostro ai fascisti . . . Spingo la porta sudando freddo. Sono disarmata, se Carla è stata perquisita e le è stata trovata la rivoltella, il solo fatto che stia intervenendo in suo favore basta a incriminarmi . . . Entro e con mio grande stupore, vedo lei tranquillamente seduta che sta fumando una sigaretta e chiacchierando con i repubblicini. 'Ah!' esclama quando mi vede, 'sei venuta a spiegare a questi camerati che hanno preso un granchio? Ma ho già chiarito tutto.' Mentre parla, tiene la borsetta ben stretta sotto il braccio . . . Per fortuna, sapeva del mio tesserino, per fortuna a tutt'e due è venuto in mente di recitare la stessa parte. (70)

I have quoted Musu's version not to show that we can never trust autobiographies as a source of objective truth but rather to show how autobiographical texts construct the speaking 'I' and, in Paul Eakin's words, "what they can teach us about the ways in which individuals in a particular culture experience their sense of being an 'I'" (4). Clearly both Musu and Capponi, while acknowledging each other's wit and courage, see themselves as the exclusive protagonists of that episode, emphasizing very different sides of their identity. Maria Musu focuses on her unwavering courage and solidarity as essential parts of her identity; "the cold sweat" is the outward sign of the fear she experiences, facing the possibility of torture or death. Yet despite the fear she decides to enter the fascist headquarters to save a fellow partisan. Her gender is irrelevant since it does not affect either her reaction to Carla's predicament or her behaviour in the fascist quarters. She portrays herself as a comrade ready to risk her life for another partisan.

Capponi's version, on the other hand, underlines the gendering of her experience because it concentrates on the skill of manipulating men through the use of her body. She is clearly proud of her talent to play a seduction game in which she exploits the common assumption that an attractive, middle-class girl cannot be anything else but a sexual object. Her apparent passivity in accepting the officer's attentions is only a mask covering the other part of her identity, the partisan. It is interesting to trace

the part played by the revolver in both accounts. Carla claims to have disposed of it before being apprehended by the fascists. Her body is completely helpless, unable to defend itself in the face of adversity, thus all her power rests in her femininity. In Musu's account, Carla did not manage to get rid of the revolver and she had it in her purse throughout the whole incident. Knowing that the weapon would betray her, Carla guarded it like a treasure: "mentre parla, tiene la borsetta ben stretta sotto il braccio" (70). As in Vera's case, the weapon functions as a visual mark of power and as a sign of defying social prescriptions.

And yet, despite Capponi's obvious pride in successfully playing out the sexual role, her text reflects an ambivalent approach towards the gendered nature of her partisan tasks. On the one hand, she recognizes the necessity of carrying them out and appreciates the advantages of being a woman; on the other, she resents her very femininity because it defines her as weak and passive. The passivity of a female body implies passivity as an inherent trait of female identity, a pliant self in a pliant body. Capponi fights that perception with indignation. She credits her spirit of freedom and personal responsibility for the decision to join the Resistance: "Imparai a fare le mie scelte" (62). Capponi's comment has a particular significance with regard to women's motivations to become partisans. Both fictional and non-fictional sources emphasize the relational character of women's involvement in the partisan movement. In other words, they tend to take away the freedom of choice and attribute their decisions to emotional ties: love for their husbands, lovers, brothers, etc.<sup>3</sup> The female 'I' thus lacks autonomy, being reduced to a reflection of the male 'I'.

Ironically, despite her ardent proclamations, Capponi did not manage to escape that classification. In her excellent historical study of women partisans, *Partigiane, tutte le donne della resistenza*, Marina Addis Saba examines the participation of women in the GAP. The chapter called "Le ragazze dei GAP" is subtitled "Un amore a Roma." The love story refers to Carla Capponi and Rosario Bentivegna, who met during the war, fought against the Nazis, fell in love, and got married after the war. What is puzzling about Saba's approach to their story is the assumption that Carla's decision to join GAP was motivated solely by her love for Rosario: "Carla Capponi è entrata a fare parte dei GAP, vuole dividere sino in fondo i rischi che corre il suo ragazzo" (123). Saba draws her information mostly from Bentivegna's autobiography *Achtung Banditen* (published in 1983) and it is his version of their relationship which will become a historical truth. Interestingly, Carla's text refrains from telling that story; there are no outpourings of the heart besides very few and very short references to their attachment. Carla's

reticence about their relationship seems then to imply a textual response and a correction of Saba's assumption.

To discard the pervasive 'sexual fantasy' image and to assert herself as an agent, Carla confronts her commanders and demands to be treated as a real "gappista," an equal partner of her male companions. When her superiors question her physical abilities to act like a soldier, Carla bursts out: "Non ti fidi di me perché sono una donna?" (137) Denied a weapon, Carla decides to prove that she has both the physical strength and the mental determination and, in an act of cold-blooded daring, steals a gun from a fascist official on a bus full of people. From that moment, she is allowed to prepare and execute armed attacks on fascist and Nazi officials. After the attack on Via Rasella, she becomes a vice-commander of a partisan group in Centocelle, in the outskirts of Rome. In his autobiography, *Achtung Banditen*, Rosario Bentivegna recalls the mythical image evoked in popular memory of Carla, the female partisan: "Ben presto nacque a Centocelle la leggenda di quella giovane donna bionda che usciva la notte a sparare ai tedeschi" (139). Carla no longer hides the revolver in her purse, she displays it proudly and openly. The external image of Carla's body undergoes a transformation, substituting a sexual object with a woman soldier.

Capponi's text also explores the boundaries of human endurance, the effects of material deprivation on the sense of identity. What happens if our physical body, "an anchor which sustains our sense of identity" is threatened with extinction (Eakin, 11)? Fighting in the countryside near Rome, Capponi has to adapt to the harsh conditions of living on the margins of humanity, the clandestine existence which requires total isolation from her family, friends, party members, even news. Like a prisoner entering a death camp, she has to leave all the attributes of her personal life behind and become a body which performs orders, a body without a past or a future. The physical ordeal of that period takes a heavy toll: cold, hunger, lack of adequate clothes, personal hygiene, and sleep are constant torments of her existence. Her body, no longer an asset, but a weight to contend with, takes over the narrative "I" when hunger threatens the core of her existence:

Dopo il secondo giorno, i crampi della fame cominciarono a tormentarmi, bevevo acqua ma mi provocava dolore allo stomaco. Verso sera, all'avvicinarsi del coprifuoco cominciai a divenire ansiosa. Alla terza sera ero spaventata, non riuscivo a bere che a piccoli sorsi, sentivo freddo, mi assopivo e mi risvegliavo d'improvviso con la sensazione di avere le vertigini. Cercai avanzzi di cibo senza trovare nulla; la pulizia perfetta di questa casa me la faceva odiare, eppure avevo sognato per mesi di un letto pulito. (264)

Capponi captures here what happens to the self if the body is on the verge of disintegration, how one's identity (memory and consciousness) depends on bodily functions. Her descriptions of the days spent in the countryside near Rome revolve around physical discomfort and suffering. Her body betrays her and demands constant attention: she gets sick, coughs blood, and has to battle high fever. Every gesture and every simple action become a painful effort. She has lost so much weight that her mother and friends do not recognize her when she returns home after the liberation: "Tutt'ossi sei, figlietta mia," —exclaims her mother (305). Her body, like the bodies of her companions, bears testimony of the partisan experience: "Tutti magrissimi, pallidi, qualcuno ancora con i segni delle torture subite, solo io avevo il volto abbronzato dal sole per i giorni passati a Palestrina, ma non stavo meglio di loro" (303). Carla recognizes her own body in the emaciated bodies of others. Gender becomes insignificant since "tutti" includes all the partisans, male and female. In the final image of the text Carla asserts her identity as a genderless partisan, erasing the split into an object and an agent and reconciling the two realities: "Stavo tornando con il fucile in spalla, la fascia tricolore al braccio" (303).

## II

*I giorni veri 1943-45* by Giovanna Zangrandi (a literary pseudonym of Alma Bevilacqua) is a diary written over the period of two years: from 8 September 1943 till the end of April 1945, but published only in 1963.<sup>4</sup> With a degree in chemistry, Zangrandi was a science teacher in the high school in Cortina when she heard the news, first of Italy's surrender to the Allied Forces, then of the creation of the Republic of Salò and the Nazi occupation of Italy. Zangrandi, a seasoned skier and an avid hiker, offered her services to the Resistance as a courier (*staffetta*). Her duties included transporting and distributing plain clothes for Italian soldiers, deserters from the fascist army, smuggling weapons and explosives for partisan groups around Bolzano, and carrying correspondence and urgent messages between commanding centres of the CLN from Veneto to Piemonte. In her essay entitled "L'esperienza, la memoria, la scrittura delle donne," Marina Zancan observes that Zangrandi's diary, like other autobiographical texts, "alludes to the experience of the body" ("un'esperienza solitaria e feconda di presenza e di coscienza nella storia. Lo dimostrano contenuti frammentari che accennano ad esperienze del corpo" 237). My reading of Zangrandi's text reveals more than just allusions to the experience of the body; it is a text which simultaneously produces and is produced through the experience of the body.



Like Capponi, Zangrandi inhabits two bodies: the 'external' body, the image she projects for the benefit of others, changing masks and poses according to necessity, and the physical core she claims as her own: "il mio stomaco, *io*" (17). She carefully constructs the outer body through an array of disguises in order to carry out her tasks successfully. Despite her reservations about her acting skills, she plays convincingly the role of a black market smuggler, traveling on a train with heavy suitcases full of civilian clothes for deserters: "non è poi difficile, alla filodrammatica riuscivo male e mi misero fuori, ma qui non è palcoscenico di un buffo teatrino, è un treno vero e guarda un po' come è facile mentire, recitare, ingannare" (55). Her slim frame fills up with layers of nitroglicerine "nei luoghi più scarni del mio corpo; sono magra, piallata. Ci son venute alcune maggiorazioni (provvidenziale un certo regipetto vuoto che mi ha imprestato la moglie di un ferroviere)" (40). Impersonating a peasant woman ("viso da contadina sorridente" 43) who is carrying a basket of precious eggs for her ailing parents, she accepts a ride from a German soldier who takes great care not to break the eggs, in reality, explosive material.

She poses as a feminine painter who crosses forests and meadows armed with "l'album dei disegnetti dei fiori e dei panoramini" (92). The diminutives she uses in her narration bring out the irony of the real purpose of her painting expedition: preparing a detailed topographical map of the mountain zone needed by the partisan command to plan and execute explosions of trains, bridges, and roads. Her knowledge of German enables her to play a mistress of a Wehrmacht official in search of medicine for her sick lover. The German patrol warns her: "brafa moidele attenta partisan non ti tagliare capelli" (140). Ingratiating smiles plastered on her face and an attitude of forced servility constitute an external shell which conceals a will to fight and to kill: "Si diventa macchine da sorridere e uccidere" (155). This image of a machine capable of smiling and killing captures the complexity of the female partisan identity: a body which is at the same time a passive object and an active subject. Zangrandi replaces the maternal love with the love of hatred, growing and nourishing it inside her womb like her own baby: "Ci si accorge di amare quest'odio come figlio che cresce nell'ulva" (31). This sentence captures the essence of being a partisan woman. It subverts the rhetoric of a mother's narrative; nourishing a baby means protecting life while nourishing hatred means killing.

When the fascist and the German authorities put a price on her head ("50.000 lire, mi sento molto signorina da marito con dote", 210), a friendly railroad worker warns her: "Sta attenta, ti cercano . . . vedi di travestirti, cercano una dalla faccia scura, malmessa, scarpe sfondate, passo



sportivo. Sta attenta, truccati" (135). Zangrandi takes his advice and transforms her appearance into a caricature of a slut: "Così stamattina con le forbici mi sono fatta una frangetta e rossetto e pittura, una faccia da puttanella; tiro fuori un vestito pretenzioso e le scarpe con dodici centimetri di tacco" (135). Her clumsy attempt to turn her body into a sexual object brings a moment of comic relief when her fellow-partisan, Severino, ridicules her newly acquired femininity: "Severino dice che nella fontana ci sarebbe meglio la mia faccia, che mi regalerà uno specchio perché impari a pitturarmi, almeno figurare da tariffa migliore" (156). The lighthearted tone of this scene, however, leads to a painful awareness that as a woman partisan she is, in fact, often perceived as a slut, a female body who uses the war as a pretext for easy sex.<sup>5</sup>

In her interminable travels she encounters people who judge her. She notices "occhi che a volte frugano nel cuore, misurandotelo col loro metro, e sotto le sottane, occhi in cui senti 'con chi sarai andata a letto, tu puttana dei partigiani, dicono che siete gentaccia dal libero amore'" (142). Zangrandi suffers the injustice of these gazes because being a partisan for her means being sexless, being just a body programmed for carrying out orders and killing:

Forse credono che io e Severino ci strusciamo come un uomo e una donna e non sanno che in questo momento siamo ambedue come senza sesso, solo due corpi umani che hanno muscoli per uccidere, grilletti e dita sui grilletti e ciò ch'era un 'cuore' o un cervello di essere civile è solo ora una entità inafferrabile, esasperata, selvaggia, forse più per estrema difesa che per vendetta. (150-151)

Like Capponi, Zangrandi wants to be treated as an equal by her fellow partisans, to put aside prejudices and stereotypes concerning women and to establish a democracy of gender: "Butta fuori un altro pezzo di focaccia nei gavettini, e parti giuste, basta con le storie che le donne non devono bere, fumare, bestemmia come voi: democrazia in quelle tre gavette, ohè!" (189) She can hardly remember the sensation of feeling like a woman; it is a distant memory, similar to that of "inarrivabile infanzia," a memory buried under layers of masks and poses (183). Zangrandi questions her own identity when she looks perplexed at her own photograph taken for a false ID: "Quella foto sono un viso magro e triste: sono io quella lì?" (202) Her doubt of her own identity corresponds to the suspicions voiced by her fellow partisans: is she really a resistance fighter or a spy who uses her femininity to penetrate the partisan ranks and then to betray them. Anna listens incredulously to their accusations: "Ma cosa avete pen-

sato? Che ero io la spia che ha tradito?” (206) She feels crushed by their accusations, but endures calmly the interrogation which proves her innocence. A hunger pang, a bodily sensation of physical pain, evokes and at the same time sharpens the memory of mental suffering. She compares her pitiless stomach to her merciless companions: “Cucchiai di minestra fitta e fredda che vanno giù, vanno in questo affamato stomaco, spietato lui pure” (207).

The struggle not to lose herself in the confusion of outward roles and gestures echoes the bodily struggle to survive. If she can fight the enemy through disguises and pretences, the confrontation with nature requires physical strength and endurance, a body trained to fight the ferocity of the elements. She contrasts the idyllic image of the Alps as “strisciolina alta e bianca sopra le nebbie dell’orizzonte, come le vedevo da bambina, irreali e favolose” with the image of immense distance to be covered: “E invece sono vere e si deve passare di là” (222). She loves and fears nature, with a fear which she defines as “paura di me stessa, sola, senza esseri umani attorno, un ‘io’ che ritorna superbamente alla netta e immensa materia, . . . era come un terrore di farsi annebbiare, vincere, annientare dall’infinito della natura, di farsi prendere dalla morte” (77). Nature demands responsibility and respect, she resembles a tough and severe mother who will punish every little mistake, but reward every effort to appease her. Zangrandi recounts in detail how she prepares for every expedition, how much care she takes to assure that she has the right equipment that she has chosen the right path, that she constantly watches changes in weather and snow conditions. Even the smallest slip could cost her life. Every victory of her body over nature fills her with happiness and exhilaration. A New Year’s Eve spent in a mountain cave during a raging snow storm makes her appreciate yet another such victory:

Nessun pensiero alle cose solite dei capodanni, alle feste che fa la gente; solo essere felici perché anche stavolta ce l’ho fatta, a infilare la casera; a tirar fuori i piedi prima che gelino, a non restarci sfinita nella morte bianca. Ho cercato di metterci molto tempo a leccare quelle patate, pulire bucce religiosamente; sono finite. E si pensa: ‘Non dormire, o ti geli, cura il fuoco. Lo sai che a bivaccare si deve trovare un filo di pensiero. (193)

She coaches her body to adapt to the demands of her new life, what she calls “rispolverare il selvaggio ch’era in noi” (185), and proudly annotates every triumph. She learns how to control sleep ordering her body to wake up instantly at the slightest hint of danger: “Ho talmente abituato l’organismo a ‘far guardia’ che anche nelle sere sospette, quando decidiamo

dei turni, se dormo, mi accorgo dei rumori e li identifico prima di colui ch'è in fazione" (185). She is confident that her face will not betray her feelings because she trained the muscles to obey her at will: "so che la mia faccia non segna muscolo per nessun orrore *se voglio*." (221) She is grateful for having a stomach which digests anything and allows her body to function efficiently: "Questo tempo di fame ti ha fatto constatare una tua fortuna, prima non ben valutata e una più grande scoperta; la fortuna di avere uno stomaco per cui tutto passa: polenta muffita, minestra acida, carne fetente di strane bestie, magari poco fresche che gli altri buttano, pasta nera come sabbia e avanzi sbocconcellati, pastoni, pappe e brode, tutto va giù e fa chilometri" (141). Kilometers, between 80 and 200 a day, to be covered on foot, skis, or by bike provide a test that her body has to take and to pass over and over again. She manages to forget exhaustion and despair when her body catches the rhythm of nature: "ora la neve perfetta e la discesa mi prendono, un'euforia mi fa cantare come allora, un motivo di valzer che sincronizza il mio slalom indavolato tra i tronchi della Valdalega e poi giù per il canale della valle a velocità folle" (190). As in Capponi's case, the partisan experience clings unmistakingly to Zangrandi's body, betraying her partisan identity. A friend advises her to avoid people, thus reducing the risk of a possible denunciation to German authorities: "Dice che con quell'odore lì adosso, fumo di bivacco, minestra, sudore mai lavato, ecc. non dovrei andare per il paese" (196). Zangrandi's narrative completes a full circle—her physical toughness, "fisico da bracconiere" (13), determines her partisan experience and, in turn, the partisan experience produces a new awareness and appreciation of her body and its ability to adapt and to survive.

In *Deviazione* Luce D'Eramo notes that "È curioso come il corpo non ha memoria." (285) However, as the two texts I have discussed demonstrate, the autobiographical reconstruction of the past takes place through recurring bodily memories. The physical sensations of cold, hunger, exhaustion, pain, etc. serve as memory props, arresting the past and projecting it in a series of body images. To render the terror of being hunted down by a German soldier, Zangrandi condenses the recollection into a flash where "c'è solo il mio corpo vivo e impazzito di terrore" (169). That constant awareness of a physical reality, however, constitutes only a part in the partisan experience of both Capponi and Zangrandi. It is the exploration of the gendered reality, the split of their bodies into objects and agents which plays a crucial part in their narratives. The two autobiographies negotiate their way between the social constructs of women's roles and their determination to challenge and exceed accepted limits and

boundaries. The poses and masks adopted by Capponi and Zangrandi, their outward selves, repeat the hegemonic forms of behaviour, but, as Judith Butler points out, repetition does not have to be faithful, and it is in the failure “to repeat loyally” that new bodies and new models are born (124).

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Venturi's story has attracted a lot of critical attention since its first edition as well as praise for its Hemingwayan qualities: a dry simplicity of narration, a rapid staccato rhythm, and a surprise ending with the echo of shots. See Giovanni Falaschi who notes that “la costruzione dei suoi racconti obbedisce a un ritmo rapidissimo che riproduce il modo in cui i più giovani sentivano la Resistenza: come un movimento fisico di forze, violento e concitato, con brevissime pause seguite subito dalla ripresa degli avvenimenti. Il racconto è costruito con una tensione verso la catastrofe; ha questo valore la ‘botta secca’, lo sparo finale,” (64). According to Rosario Contarino and Marcella Tedeschi, Venturi is a follower of Hemingway and an admirer of westerns dominated by “l'intreccio avventuroso sulla base dell'imprevedibile, condizione costante della lotta partigiana,” (201). None of the critics, however, comment on the image of a woman partisan.

<sup>2</sup>Elizabeth Grosz examines the body's object/subject status in *Volatile Bodies*, a fascinating history of the body and the self, and concludes, that “If bodies are objects or things they are like no others, for they are the centers of perspective, insight, reflection, desire, agency. Bodies are not inert; they function interactively and productively. They act and react. They generate what is new, surprising, unpredictable” (x-xi).

<sup>3</sup>Renata Vigano's novel, *L'Agnese va a morire*, deemed the official novel of the Italian Resistance, true to life in all its aspects, evokes a partisan in a maternal body. Agnese, a simple, uneducated peasant, married to an ailing but well educated husband acts as a substitute mother first for her husband, and after his death, for the partisans. Agnese's body (with a hint of past sexual attraction) exists to serve others; it is a body which protects, nourishes, and comforts. Agnese functions only in relation to others, in fact, even her participation in the Resistance is motivated by an act of personal vengeance for the killing first of her husband, and later of her cat, by the Nazis. This relational aspect of women's participation in the partisan ranks, the heart as a motive for their decisions, becomes a criterion for reading a vast majority of autobiographical texts. Rosario Contarino and Marcella Tedeschi clearly wrestle with the representation of a female partisan. On the one hand, they acknowledge that the war and the Resistance were historical moments of great importance for women: “Il problema della Resistenza coincide per le donne partigiane con quello della loro emancipazione, . . . indicazione di un

momento di rottura nel rapporto donna-società che si dilata alla coscienza politica postresistenziale" (194). On the other hand, their critical analysis focuses mainly on the relational character of these narratives, that is, they regard them as stories of male heroes, husbands, sons, and brothers told by women; women's own stories seem to be of secondary importance. Thus, Barbara Allason's *Memorie di un'antifascista* is called "un'opera squisitamente femminile," (177). Marina Sereni's *I giorni della nostra vita* demonstrates "la consapevolezza di essere sposa e madre oltre che militante rivoluzionaria," (176). Ada Gobetti's *Diario partigiano*, "è un prodotto antieroico e antiretorico . . . trepidante di amore materno, saporosamente domestico," (194). This 'heart' rhetoric of literary criticism is a devious ploy because it supplies an interpretative filter which both obscures and distorts our reading of women's texts. It shifts the focus from women's own struggle to adopt new roles and to take on new identities to a mere repetition of traditional patterns and values.

<sup>4</sup>A renewed interest in Zangrani's writings led to a convention organized in Bologna in 1998, ten years after her death. The papers presented at that convention were published in a book form in 2000 (*Giovanna Zangrandi: donna, scrittrice, partigiana*). *I giorni veri* was reprinted in 1998 ("Le mani," Recco-Genova).

<sup>5</sup>The image of woman partisan as a slut appears in a number of fictional accounts of the Resistance, among them, in such literary classics as Italo Calvino's *Il sentiero dei nidi di ragno* or "Gli inizi del partigiano Raoul," a short story by Beppe Fenoglio. Giglia in Calvino and Iole in Fenoglio, two bodies insatiable in their appetite for sex, represent a destructive force within the partisan bands, a force capable of threatening and ruining the solidarity and harmony of male bonds.

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STEFANIA LUCAMANTE

THE 'INDISPENSABLE' LEGACY OF PRIMO LEVI:  
FROM ERALDO AFFINATI TO ROSETTA LOY BETWEEN  
HISTORY AND FICTION<sup>1</sup>

It is important for students of Italian literature and culture to understand the peculiarities of Italian Jewish literature with respect to the *Shoah* and thus to understand why contemporary Italian writers frequently interrogate their immediate past.<sup>2</sup> This article will thus examine connections between more 'traditional' texts (testimonies and fictions) of the *Shoah* and contemporary Italian literary production. By 'contemporary,' I mean two kinds of works: those of writers such as Rosetta Loy who, relatively young at the time of racial laws, deportations, and concentration camps, have written about the Holocaust only in recent years and with rather different outcomes, and those such as Eraldo Affinati, who are the 'children of the Holocaust' because they have lived this part of history 'through' the destinies of their relatives.

It took many years for Italian writers to gain a full understanding of the Jewish genocide and to construct a historiography for this "epochal event," as Emil Fackenheim called the *Shoah* (as in Sullam Calimani, *I nomi dello sterminio*, 5). A temporal lapse thus separates the first testimonies, the survivors' more immediate reaction to the devastation of the *Shoah*, and contemporary works on this subject. Today, awareness and knowledge of events call for responsibility from all members of our society, particularly during the wave of anti-Semitism currently spreading across Europe.<sup>3</sup> For some Italian intellectuals, their role in analysing historical events pertinent to the *Shoah* while at the same time re-writing them in a fictional mode, has become an acknowledgment of such responsibility (Sullam Calimani, *I nomi dello sterminio*, 3). By investigating contemporary literary and fictional works on the *Shoah*, I implicitly take a position in the long-standing debate on whether this tragic event should be recounted only by actual witnesses (Elie Wiesel's stand in his *The Night*), or whether it deserves and needs the contribution of fiction. As Wolfgang Iser points out, art is a means of human self-explanation (*The Fictive and the Imaginary*, xiii), and as such provides a wider space for reasoning and listening to other voices,

all the while incorporating the imaginary and the fictive to the human dimension provided by historical facts. In my view, fiction plays an important role in this debate, for it constitutes a hospitable space in which to remind, and constantly re-discuss, human nature and behaviour at times of extreme crisis.

In this article I will investigate the ramifications of the influence and 'indispensable' legacy of Primo Levi who appears to be the 'canonical' witness in the works (fictional and non-fictional) of this second generation of Italian writers of the Holocaust. I will consider some of the questions asked by Dominick LaCapra in the introductory pages of his *History and Memory After Auschwitz* as to whether or not "some events present moral and representational issues even for groups not directly involved in them" and whether "those more directly involved have special responsibilities to the past and the way it is remembered in the present." He then wonders whether "art itself [has] a special responsibility with respect to traumatic events that remain invested with value and emotion" (*History and Memory After Auschwitz*, 1). I will analyse Italian works ranging from testimony to essay and to fiction. I will do this particularly for those writers, such as Eraldo Affinati and Rosetta Loy, confronting a traumatic event they have not directly experienced, but which they have worked through in their own imagination and investigation.

### Primo Levi and his "Indispensable" Legacy

Primo Levi's writings reaffirm the central dialectic of Holocaust narratives of trauma, the "conflict between the will to deny horrible events and the will to proclaim them aloud." (Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 1). Levi's intellectual legacy is such that, without his work, it would be difficult to study today's writings on the Holocaust. After his initial testimonial writings, Levi's work is based on the careful analysis of some basic categories at the core of Holocaust criticism, as well as at the core of works of fiction such as his *If Not Now, When?* (1982). The categories are those of the witnesses and their role; trial; representability; uniqueness of this tragedy; collective and individual moral responsibility, the "grey zone." Levi began defining them in 1946 in his *Survival in Auschwitz (If this is a Man)* and would revisit them throughout his life. While others chose silence as an alternative and as an understandable form of denial and of rejection of further suffering so as to avoid the trauma of recalling their experience, Levi chose instead to be like Coleridge's ancient mariner, telling and retelling his story even when nobody would listen to him. The recurring dream, in which he was not being listened to, the same one Levi shared with Antelme

and with so many other survivors, expressed not only the fear of not finding an audience, but also, and particularly in Levi's case, the anguish of lexical and syntactical vacuums that hinder the representation of the 'inde-scribable' that begs to be described, that block the utterance of the 'unspeakable' that needs to be spoken.

In *The Drowned and the Saved* (1986), Levi revisited his own memoirs at a distance of some forty years. By then Levi had already read an impressive number of testimonies and scholarly texts, and he had revisited Buna-Auschwitz with other survivors, all the while contributing to the ongoing discussion on the *Shoah*. What distinguishes him from other non-fiction writers of the Holocaust is that Levi managed in his lifetime to re-read himself in successive writings, to draw theoretical statements about his own experience, sifted through the process of retelling. Temporal distance from the events re-analysed allowed for Levi's categories to become even more universal in his *The Drowned and the Saved*. The process of decantation of the more 'physical' memories—as we perceive in Robert Antelme's *The Human Race*, for instance—plays a key role in the readings of Levi's legacy to follow, particularly in this last text. The process of decantation eliminates the physicality of events and leaves space for more philosophical treatments. What follows is a closer examination of the witness in contemporary society.

How history is perceived today depends very much on an emerging notion of witness/victim and his/her role in historiographical discourse. Historiographical discourse and the duty of historians have been transformed, for their task now is to write history from the side of the victims, and not that of the victors. History as seen and witnessed by survivors constructs a parallel with the kind of discourse that re-tellers of that historical moment narrate. Unlike in the past, victims now record and testify to history themselves. According to Annette Wieviorka, testimony is always chronologically and sociologically bound to the *hic et nunc* of what remains, after all, an act of speech, a recollection of events:

Testimony expresses, above all, what each individual, each experience of the *Shoah*, has of unique. It does so, however, with *words belonging to the epoch in which the witness is witnessing*, starting from the implicit requests and expectations that are themselves contemporary to this testimony. They ultimately attribute to the act of testimony scopes that depend on what is then politically or ideologically at stake. Testimony thus contributes to create one or more collective memories, erratic in their content, in their form, in their function, and in the goals, more or less explicit, that they attribute to themselves. (Wieviorka, *L'età del testimone*, 14; emphasis added)



A new form of historical discourse is thus taking shape through the act of witnessing and through the collective nature of witnessing. But which witnesses inform us about historical facts?

Data meticulously registered in chronicles have been replaced by human voices. However, the "human memory" behind these voices "is a fallacious instrument," as Levi himself writes (*The Drowned and the Saved*, 16). These memories therefore "should also be read with a critical eye" —he adds—in the establishment of new ethical categories necessarily created by the transformation of the historiographical discourse. If memory is a "fallacious instrument," what should we trust in the transmission of these data to the future? It is significant to remember Levi's apology for his own fallacious memory, something of which is profoundly aware:

This very book is drenched in memory; what's more, a distant memory. Thus it draws from suspect source, and must be protected against itself. So here then: it contains more *considerations than memories*, lingers more willingly on the state of affairs such as it is now than on the retroactive chronicle. (*The Drowned and the Saved*, 21)

When we assume such a manifest importance for the role of the witness, a "crucial source for history" that is not devoid of "emotional implications," (LaCapra, *History and Memory After Auschwitz*, 11-12) we should keep in mind that even this category is subject to individual assessment and that the kind of importance varies depending on the different purposes of its use in future times.<sup>4</sup> Is Levi thus important as an historical witness or, rather, as an artist who managed to make of his own work a constant laboratory of ideas on human nature and artistic expressive forms about the limits of representability of extreme historical events such as the Holocaust?

Levi, as seen by historian Annette Wiewiorka, is a 'particular' kind of Jew; not at all representative of the collectiveness that forms the *Shoah*. For her, Levi and Antelme are not emblematic of the survivors of the camp experience, just as much as their testimonies are not emblematic of the event. As an historian, in fact, Wiewiorka wonders why their works are more studied than Adam Czerniakow's *Diaries*, which are certainly more representative of a vast majority of Eastern Jewry. Paradoxically, if the aesthetic aspect of Antelme and Levi's testimonies and their aesthetic uniqueness make them worthy of careful study, consequent inclusion in academic courses, and of being subject to such acclaim from a literary standpoint, from an historiographical point of view these qualities frustrate the work of the historian (Wiewiorka, *L'età del testimone*, 38). The universality of

their reflections on Auschwitz and the genocide do little to help understand the multitude of voices behind their testimonies. In support of Wiewiorka's point, I bring into the discussion another historian reader of Levi, Frediano Sessi. He has noted some apparent lapses that confine Levi's books and testimony to a literary realm. As a result, Levi's writing should not be considered an historical reference. Sessi does not search for mistakes: he simply shows how, even in his initial pursuit of objectivity and in the grandiosity of his tableaux of the camp and his painful way back to Italy and life in general, Levi suffers from historiographical lapses in the retelling of life in Auschwitz. These lapses are important, for they do not show weakness in Levi's legacy, but rather help us understand the discrepancy between historical truth and testimonial, which in itself contains, by necessity, fictional elements on which Levi's artistic legacy can be based. Here are two examples:

- 1) Levi claims that Auschwitz was built late and conceived from the beginning as a concentration camp. We know from Raul Hilberg that Auschwitz was not initially conceived as a *Vernichtungslager*, (extermination camp), but as a quarantine and transit camp for Russian soldiers and Polish resistance fighters, and that only gradually, in 1942, in a way that Sessi calls "the graduality of horror," it was turned into an extermination camp;
- 2) Diaries found near the gas chambers contradict Levi, in that at least six people have been able to narrate their own death, even using their own blood as ink (Sessi, "La letteratura concentrazionaria," 21). Still, Sessi never undermines Levi's reflections on the "graduality of truth," as he does not think of the writer as an historian. What emerges from Levi's writings about the unwitnessed remains valid, along with the aesthetic and epistemological value of his work. This holds true even though from an historical point of view, imprecision needs to be revisited (Sessi, "La letteratura concentrazionaria," 22), if only as survivals of Levi's own "fallacious instrument" called memory.

Sessi offers three reasons why *The Drowned and the Saved* attests to the importance of fiction as a mode to investigate the past. These three reasons are drawn directly from the lack of a connection between the deportee and the historian and the actuality of events, as "not even the sense of the event is automatically suggested to us by the recount of a witness." (Sessi, "La letteratura concentrazionaria," 22-23) Levi's *The Drowned and the Saved* leaves open the debate on an ethical and aesthetic revisiting of the Holocaust; Levi's coming to terms with the fact that the 'heart' of the camp experience is in fact an event without testimonies, as the real witnesses are

the *Muselmänner*, thus making “fictional texts (novels and stories) the place from where one can have the drowned speak”; and one more possibility as the novelist touches upon topics and advances reflections and judgments, whereas the historian cannot, unless has documents”: the voice of the witness *per conto terzi* (“through somebody else”; Sessi, “La letteratura concentrazionaria,” 27). These reasons find their evidence in the work of Eraldo Affinati and Rosetta Loy.

### Levi's Legacy: Eraldo Affinati and his Role as Intellectual

Eraldo Affinati's *Campo del sangue* exemplifies a new type of testimony, the composition of a Holocaust of ‘invention,’ which ‘finds’ a memory for events not personally witnessed. Written in 1997, more than fifty years after Auschwitz, Affinati's autobiographical work is unusual in its composite aggregation of personal material combined with passages from other texts. *Campo del sangue* is a personal narrative of a trip Affinati took from Venice to Auschwitz in 1995, interrupted by excerpts from texts written by Levi, Antelme, Semprun, and from other witnesses and scholars of the Holocaust. As is frequent in contemporary writings on the Holocaust, this is a hybrid text, not a novel, nor a travelogue, nor an essay. It defies generic definition, for this is a book whose hybridity attests to the difficulty of dealing with personal events while linking them to public ones. The purpose behind this book manifests the intensity by which the action of thinking about an historical and private trauma—one seen as collective—brings it constantly back to life in artists who feel their role in society to be one in which ethical duties toward themselves, their readers, and the past, are mandatory.

However we categorize his book, Affinati feels he belongs to a “second generation” of Holocaust survivors (*Campo del sangue*, 9). The “children of the Holocaust” are, in a way, the aesthetic agents of this “post-apocalypse” period, responsible for keeping alive the memory of such an apocalyptic event not only in life, but also in art. Holocaust recollection is constantly studied as a means to overcome the original mistake of “unbelievability” that did not allow the public to prepare itself for the tragic events that were to follow, as well as a way to come to terms with these events, an heroic act of working through that often requires the use of invention in order to link the fragments left hanging loose by the voices of the previous generation. Antelme writes: “‘Unimaginable’ is a word that doesn't divide, doesn't restrict. The most convenient word. When you walk around with this word as your shield, this word for emptiness, your step becomes better assured, more resolute, your conscience pulls itself together” (*The Human Race*, 290).

Like Affinati, these latter writers have not “witnessed,” but they bear witness to the Holocaust, nevertheless. They show art's commitment to

imagining what is not imaginable in real life. They reject the comfort of the 'unimaginable' word, and pursue instead new venues of discourse to 'imagine'.

### Second-generation Holocaust Writers

An initial division in Holocaust writers was clearly defined by Norma Rosen's categories (in *Touching Evil*; see also Berger, "Ashes and Hope," 93-95). Briefly summarized, they comprise the literature written by witnesses themselves and that produced by "witnesses through imagination," as Alan Berger points out ("Ashes and Hope," 98). In his study, Berger claims that in Rosen's second category there has been a gross misuse of this historical event, seen merely as background for fiction, as in the oft-cited case of William Styron *Sophie's Choice*.<sup>5</sup> He adds a third category, the one formed by the children of the Holocaust who write about the impact of this tragic event on their parents. There are two orientations: a specific Judaic quest and a more universal message about improving society at large (Berger, "Ashes and Hope," 99).

Berger's third category of such witnesses, defined as "children of the Holocaust," is not entirely appropriate for Affinati's case. Even if one of the most triggering instances of his book was that in 1944 his mother was "almost" deported to a concentration camp and his grandfather executed for partisan activities, the fact remains that the Italian writer is not Jewish, thus he fails to have the biographical tie with survivors in the most specific sense of the term. We also cannot compare Affinati's case to that of Binjamin Wilkomirski's "fraud" in *Fragments*;<sup>6</sup> he is not assuming any false identity in order to write a testimonial of an experience that did not belong to him directly, nor is he fabricating stories he did not live.

What we have is an interesting case of a teacher, a traditional kind of intellectual according to Gramsci, who has determined to contribute to society with his work. "Non bisognerebbe mai separare il pensiero dall'azione" ("one should never separate thought from action") Affinati states:

Questa tentata spaccatura è, io credo, il tarlo dell'epoca moderna: il mondo senza testa e la testa senza mondo. Affermando il primato della coscienza sulla realtà l'artista novecentesco ha di fatto dato campo libero all'uomo d'azione, lo ha lasciato andare al proprio destino. Nel nazismo si riverbera tale abbandono. (*Campo del sangue*, 81)

(This attempted split is, I believe, the gnawing of modern times: the world without head and the head without world. By affirming the primacy of consciousness upon reality, the twentieth century artist has indeed given free rein to the man of action, has let him go to his own destiny. Such abandonment reverberates in Nazism.)

Affinati declares his debt and gratitude to Primo Levi for how Levi “helped him not to share the attitude of those who think they can stay free in front of the word they chose ( “Primo Levi,” 57). Affinati states further:

Se il linguaggio non è un mero strumento di comunicazione, ma piuttosto il luogo dei nostri pensieri, il centro stesso dell’orientamento vitale, il colore della visione a cui siamo legati, allora risulta impossibile chiamarsi fuori rispetto al fuoco dialettico che si determina ogni volta che scriviamo o parliamo: dobbiamo necessariamente prendere posizione, o modificarla, se le conseguenze di ciò che abbiamo detto ci spingono a farlo. (“Primo Levi,” 57)

(If language is not a mere instrument of communication, but rather the locus of our thoughts, the very centre of the vital orientation, the colour of the vision we believe in, it then seems impossible to declare ourselves outside the dialectical focus which takes place every time we write or speak: we must necessarily take a stand, or modify it, if the consequences of that which we have said lead us to do so.)

The totalitarian systems of the twentieth-century fed precisely on the intellectual who would work apart from society.

When Affinati speaks about “the responsibility of the word,” he refers to the “constant attention” that an individual must pay to the “chemical combination that, along with the cultural education, determines our personality.”<sup>7</sup>

L’opera letteraria, così intesa, come un boomerang che torna a interrogarlo, diventa uno specchio retroattivo, la voce della sua coscienza, la prova del nove per misurare la legittimità di certe intuizioni, una sorta di banca-dati che va aggiornata per essere tenuta in vita nell’orizzonte delle future attese. (“Primo Levi,” 59)

(When conceived as a boomerang returning to question the author, the literary work becomes a retroactive mirror, the voice of his/her consciousness, the definite trial to weigh the legitimacy of his intuitions, a type of data bank which needs updating to be kept alive in the horizon of future expectations.)

In his writing, the private sphere, exemplified by his mother’s escape from forced deportation to the concentration camps and by his own grandfather’s execution, entwines almost seamlessly with the public role of *scrittura*, a role that he feels the *letterato*, the *uomo di lettere* should retain and be faithful to, at any cost, both as a writer and as a teacher in front of students. As Affinati writes, prior to his physical departure on this trip, he engaged in a series of readings on this topic. An individual obsession, linked to the private sphere of his existence, initially triggered Affinati’s writing of this autobiographical/ literary re-creation of his own journey to



Auschwitz, where his reading *littérature concentrationnaire* came finally 'to make sense,' an occasion for acting out experiences he never lived. He writes, "gli uomini sono capaci di mettere a frutto ogni cosa: forse io, come figlio, rappresento una risposta al pericolo che mia madre introiettò quel giorno." (*Campo del sangue*, 23; "human beings are capable of putting to interest any thing; perhaps, as a her son, I did represent a response to the danger my mother introjected that day.") Such individual, private obsession could become useful to all of us who still do not feel the reason for a collective, enduring, and tragic responsibility for the *Shoah*:

Al centro di tale percorso conoscitivo c'è, credo la composizione di *Campo del sangue* [...]. Il modo in cui è nato quel testo corrisponde pienamente alla mia idea di letteratura, oggi. Erano anni che leggevo documenti narrativi e saggistici relativi ai campi di concentramento nazisti e sovietici. [...] A un certo punto mi sono chiesto la ragione di questa ossessione conoscitiva: ho capito che riguardava non solo la mia persona, come figlio di una donna che era riuscita a fuggire, cinquant'anni prima, da un treno che la stava conducendo ai lager, e come nipote di un uomo fucilato dai nazisti in quanto partigiano. Le riflessioni che, di giorno in giorno, andavo facendo riguardavano ogni essere umano perché quello che accadde nei campi di concentramento, nella sua estrema, chiama in causa la natura stessa dell'uomo. E allora ho voluto compiere un'azione fisica, appunto il viaggio, per rendere conto e rendermi conto di ciò che credevo di aver capito. (Affinati, "Primo Levi," 61)

(At the centre of such learning process lies, I believe, the composition of *Campo del sangue* [...] The way in which that text was born fully corresponds to my idea of literature today. For years I was reading narratives and essays relative to Nazi and soviet concentration camps [...] At a certain point, I asked myself what was the reason behind my obsession for knowledge: I realized that not only regarded me as a person, as the son of a woman who managed to escape, fifty years ago, from a train going to the lager, and as a grandchild of a man shot by the Nazis because he was a partisan. The reflections which, day by day, I formed, concerned every human being because what happened in the concentration camps, in its extreme, questions the very nature of man. And so I wanted to accomplish a physical act, the journey, that is, to render and to realize an accounting of what I thought I had previously understood.)

Eraldo Affinati's relativizing approach to the painful theme of concentration camps,<sup>8</sup> the intellectual and collective responsibility that we all should share regarding the *Shoah*, attempts to re-conceive an image of the intellectual at the service of society, an individual who, through his own experience, believes himself to be of value to society in reassessing events of his family's past—the private ones with which he deals everyday, even

unconsciously—that have a necessary reason to be reconnected to the recent history of a country, a race, or a religion. The issue of consciousness, aside from the idea of collective trauma, is at the centre of Affinati's *voyage au rebours*, an actual journey he took to Auschwitz:

Non posso comunque evitare di ripercorrere le tracce di chi mi ha preceduto: ho già deciso di assumerle in pieno, come se dovessi viaggiare nella matrice delle testimonianze, in un calco memoriale, diventando il modello teorico del deportato. (*Campo del sangue*, 13)

(I cannot help but to travel over the path which was left by those who came before me: I have already decided to assimilated them in full, as if I should travel in the matrix of the testimonies, in a memorial impression, thus becoming the theoretical model of the deportee.)

He himself, the 'intellectual' becomes the theoretical model of the deportee, "Il modello teorico del deportato" or a virtual *Häftling*, one of those colourless, almost unanimated creatures of Nazi propaganda, as Levi wrote in *Se questo è un uomo*, awkwardly translated in English as *Survival in Auschwitz*. If it is true, as Edward Said stated in a famous article, that "intellectual representations are the *activity* itself" (*Representations of the Intellectual*, 20), then, by reconstructing the "theoretical model of the deportee" Affinati tries to represent what his thinking process of elaboration corresponds to. The activity of elaborating the model, his attempt to visualize graphically, through letters, excerpts of other books, through his own private experience the 'product' of his intellectual activity, is touching evidence of his belief in the role of the intellectual in society, particularly in light of Primo Levi's legacy. As Affinati notes, Primo Levi made him "realize that a writer is someone who also and especially takes responsibility for those who cannot" ("Primo Levi," 61). Finally, Affinati warns about the danger of the lack of collective responsibility:

L'intero meccanismo che ha reso possibile lo sterminio del ventesimo secolo è basato sulla cancellazione della responsabilità: ogni uomo, nella Germania nazista, si sentiva giustificato, non direttamente punibile. In tale modo l'autorità morale viene resa inoperante senza essere sfidata o negata (*Campo del sangue* 39).

(The entire mechanism that has made this extermination of the twentieth century is based upon the elision of responsibility; each individual in Nazi Germany felt justified, not directly punishable. In this way, moral authority is not challenged nor denied and becomes non-operative.)

By attacking the functionalist theory by which Germans, educated in the Prussian system, simply had to 'follow orders,' Affinati renews the vow for an individual who, by assuming responsibility, impedes society from

not admitting a more universal one. Intellectuals more than others, Affinati claims, should take up the challenges of moral questioning. Commitment and awareness that literature is engagement is the true creed of Eraldo Affinati. Unlike many of his colleagues, orphans of absent political beliefs and role models, Affinati has never stopped his writing of engagement in favour of a literary production that could exploit the many postmodernist ways of rarefying meaning in order to re-construct, rather than deconstruct reality with words, faithful to Adorno's invocation in his *Negative Dialectics* to reconsider metaphysics after such reality took place. Affinati's work could be seen as a sort of paradoxically 'positive' Derridian *dissemination*, one which, instead of making meaning uncertain, in which—to cite LaCapra, "theory [...] displaces history in favour of its putative conditions of possibility", can actually re-enforce meaning by working through the vectorial connections between the word and the signified, and not "simply celebrated" (*Representing the Holocaust*, 98-99). Affinati's writings, from *Veglia alle armi* to *Campo del sangue* and *Un teologo contro Hitler*, are a statement of ethical duty on behalf of the writer to the service of society.

### Rosetta Loy

The link between Affinati and Rosetta Loy's literary engagement is the lack of collective responsibility that Levi so vigorously warned against in his writings. Loy writes incessantly about this absence in Italian society. She denounces her own indifference and that of Italians in those years in which everybody should have spoken against racial laws, against the unfairness by which neighbours—the Levi family for instance—were deprived of work and means, but particularly of their identity only because they were Jewish:

There is a black border around those guiltless days of ours. [...] How to imagine the monstrous sense of isolation they [the Levis] must have felt in the grip of the SS and their orders, which, within twenty minutes, eliminated them from the human race?" (*First Words*, 162)

Just like Affinati, Loy also is not a camp survivor, but she, too, considers herself a Holocaust survivor. Loy's unbearable legacy is that of a Christian who suffers for the silence of her fellow Christians, of an Italian who realizes that fellow Italians allowed their neighbours to be deported to camps. Members of a society that, until the day before, had accepted them and had considered them to be part of their same world, as Loy or her sisters were. They were sent, instead, to extermination camps never to come back.

And on the evening of October 16, the student this writer once was, recites the rosary, sighing with boredom as she does every evening, let-

ting her eyelids droop amid the singsong of the Hail Mary and Our Fathers. She does not give the slightest thought to supplicating her God, who after all is also the God of the Levis and the Della Setas, to send the avenging angel down to help them. She feels no impulse to scream, to do something for that boy with the cheerful face who used to ring their bell [...]. On that night of October 16, the thoughts of that girl who was no longer little [...] aren't much different from usual, focussed mainly on the notes she exchanges, by way of an elaborate system of pulleys and strings, with the Calcagno girls, who live in the apartment nearby. (*First Words* 163-64)

Loy's description of her day on 16 October 1943 is certainly excruciating for the cruelty with which today the writer records her nonchalant existence and her inability to supplicate "her God" to save her neighbours Della Seta, or the boy Giorgio with his beautiful bicycle. Loy's *First Words* aptly combines autobiographical, fictional, and reportage genres in a hybridized form of narration that brings the reader back to Loy's childhood while understanding the ethical and cognitive intent of her book. Its aim, in fact, is to shed light on the Italians' responsibility toward the victims of the Holocaust, as well as to highlight their failure to resist the implementation of the 1938 Racial Laws. Loy's objective in her writing is a constant admonition to Christians to become aware of their complicity and moral responsibility in the annihilation of Jews during the Second World War. Not only the controversial *First Words* (*La parola ebreo*), but also her novel *Ciocolata da Hanselemann* and the more overtly autobiographical *La porta dell'acqua* are Loy's most convincing works, in that they retrospectively describe this historical period while connecting them to Loy's private life as a privileged Christian Italian child.

Using all hues and shades of narrative, from autobiography to fiction, Loy pursues the search for the moral and ethical duty of her fellow Italians. Virtually every one of Loy's books refers to the indifference of Christian Italians towards the *Shoah*, but they also reflect the underlying notion of a private trauma which the author seeks to work through in her writings.

On the jacket sleeve of *First Words*, we read: "Loy reveals one writer's struggle to reconcile her memories of a happy childhood with her adult knowledge that, hidden from her young eyes, one of the world's most horrifying tragedies was unfolding." Perhaps the editor and publisher needed this stark contrast to present (and sell) the book, but, in fact, if we read Loy's overtly autobiographical *La porta dell'acqua* carefully, we realize that her childhood was not happy by any stretch of the imagination. It was secure and safe; it was wealthy, with vacations in the mountains and at the beach, but certainly not happy. A sense of loneliness denominates Loy's

autobiographical writings on her childhood. In a way, it would impossible to read *La parola ebreo* (*First Words*) without considering the importance of Loy's unresolved childhood trauma, more visible in *La porta dell'acqua*. For Loy, this trauma stems from the repressed unspoken diversity in a world rigidly divided by those who were Jewish and those who were not. It all begins in that world which her Tyrolese governess, Annemarie, blindly accepts, in Loy's little nursery where Annemarie tells her stories of *Paulenchen*. There, the little girl who will later become a writer, learns to juxtapose her own security against the world of the other little friend, Regina, whose life is marked forever by the star of David on her chest. Not a happy childhood at all then, but marked by the awareness of a profound fracture in her society, marred by the indifference of the 'nice people' toward the tragedy that was unfolding. In the period of Loy's reminiscence, two religions, which in Rome had co-habited peacefully, find themselves in *First Words* to represent a particularly difficult issue: the assimilation that allowed Jews not to understand that the first racial laws were implemented to define their "racial difference." How could two families living in the same building have a different destiny, merely because one was Christian, the other Jewish? "How could this happen?" is a question that often resonates in Italian fictions of the Holocaust from Giorgio Bassani's *The Garden of the Finzi-Contini* on. There is no temporal barrier between past and present. The personal story of the little girl is revealed through the gashes left open by the oppressing historical events of World War Two. It is an on-going past, as in Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*. In a reply to Sergio Romano's then recently published book, *Lettera a un amico ebreo*, Rosetta Loy harshly criticizes her friend for trying too hard to break with stereotypes about Jews and for dismissing the unresolved issue of the *Shoah* as "counterproductive." Romano's hypothesis, that "the Shoah has become a permanent blackmail for Westerners" is rejected by Loy as she contends that a very basic distinction needs here to be made between Israel's political use of the genocide (particularly within its borders in order to justify anti-Arab paranoia) and the silence and indifference, which Levi feared the most, that have instead enveloped the issue in Europe, where the genocide took place. Loy states,

Like everybody else, Europe proclaimed its innocence, imputing the genocide only to the defunct Nazi ideology. Except for Germany, on whom every responsibility has fallen and who is the only one who could revenge a screening of its own behaviour. What does it mean that the Jewish genocide is 'encumbering'. Encumbering for whom? (Loy, "Caro, *permaloso amico*," 52)



According to Loy, a series of questions has long remained unanswered, because they have never been posed to those few who profited from the persecution of Jews in Italy and Europe. Posing these questions has become a "tumor inside the body of Europe," Loy maintains. The recurring rationalization that dismisses this issue ("the historical context of Auschwitz no longer exists") is not in her view an answer, but a mere excuse. "The history of every genocide is connected with the locals where it took place. One does not erase the other; and the closer it is (to us) in a cultural and physical sense, the stronger, the more inevitable, the more traumatic, our involvement will be" ("Caro, *permaloso* amico," 53). In contrast to Romano's theories of archiving the encumbering holocaust, Loy recognizes the Jewish people's "right to justice," the collective character of this particular type of responsibility. Loy's analysis also involves the stereotyping of Jews and their attitude that, according to some, should never be one of reaction and aggression. Loy completely rejects such a stereotype in her fiction. In the novel *Cioccolata da Hanselmann*, Loy presents the case of a Jewish professor, Arturo, who kills Eddie, the young man who is going to the Swiss police to denounce him. The stereotype of the Jews' necessary submission to events is for Loy morally wrong, and fiction—and this novel's underlying goal which is remote from the story of the sisters—is to present such moral issues to the reader, the necessity finally to break with stereotypes.

A further fundamental question Loy poses in *First Words* regards the mysterious encyclical *Humani generis unitas* which Pius XI commissioned from John La Farge, the author of *Interracial Justice* (1938) (Loy, *First Words* 81). In a letter to *L'Indice*, Guido Fink takes up Loy's challenge and wonders whether, "quell'enciclica avrebbe potuto davvero cambiare la sorte di milioni di ebrei" ("that encyclical could really have changed the fate of millions of Jews"; Fink, *La parola ebreo*, 5). It is important to remember, however, that "Passelecq and Suchecky frantically searched for that *Encyclique Cachée*, which the future Pope Pius XII claimed disappeared, though at a latter date he used some of its passages on the sufferings of the Polish clergy, while censoring everything regarding Jews and Nazism. It is in this sense that, perhaps, this book deserves to be recommended and not only to those who 'know little'" (Fink, *La parola ebreo*, 5).

According to Fink, what Loy as an adult contests in non-fascist and non-racist Italians is their not having posed the same questions she cannot ignore today. "Brucia dirlo" "It hurts to say it" (*First Words*, 135)—this simple phrase has become significant for all those who are Christians and live with the moral consequences of the racial laws, deportation, guilt, and shame for what their relatives did not do.

## Conclusion

The peculiarities of the 'alternate route' I have followed in order to claim canonicity for Primo Levi's writings surface in the light of what has often been said to be the ultimate social, historical, and personal need for such a corpus of writings: never to forget what happened to others and to learn from our own past by means of art. 'Fiction' is not necessarily a synonym for 'novel,' and 'testimony' is not necessarily a substitute for historical research and authenticity. Every instrument can be a 'fallacious instrument,' but it can also be used with the best intentions to create artistic works and foster consciousness in readers.

In Cees Noteboom's novel *All Souls Day*, a character speaks about contemporary indifference for events memorialized in history:

we're no longer touched by the plight of others; they simply wound up on the wrong page of the history book ... because we know, even when it's happening, that's history—we're experts at that ... Amazing, isn't it, history in the making, and we don't want to have anything to do with that either ... Arno, what did that stupid Hegel of yours say? 'The days of peace are blank pages in the book of history,' or something to this effect ... Well, we are those white pages now, and they're truly blank, because we're not there. (89)

Whether or not we consider the Jewish Holocaust unique, it leads us to review a "past that is far from inert, in the sense that we rediscover it, having forgotten or repressed too much" (Hartman, *The Fateful Question of Culture*, 101). It is our moral duty today to resist the danger of considering times of peace to be "blank pages," in which there is no place for us because we do not want to remember nor to consider the past, times in which nothing seems to change simply because no wars are weighing down on the fate of Italians. But they do on others, always. Through Primo Levi's legacy, Eraldo Affinati and Rosetta Loy provide us with artistic examples of how to come to terms with historical facts and intellectual pursuits during a period of relative peace (that is, for Italians). These 'children of the Holocaust' by imagination—or vocation—are, in a way, the aesthetic agents of this 'post-apocalypse.' They feel the responsibility of keeping alive in art, and not merely in life, the memory of such an apocalyptic event. These writers have not witnessed, but they bear witness to the Holocaust, for art constantly commits itself to imagine what is not imaginable in real life. By making space in their writing for these issues, their pages are no longer 'blank,' but filled with the perpetual quest of intellectuals for a world that rediscovers humanity through culture without antagonizing these two terms. Theirs is thus a form of engagement which makes it pos-

sible still to believe in the ethical duty of intellectuals and in the necessity of art to try to “say what cannot be said.” Far from representing violations of the facts of history while juxtaposing a subject to them, as Berel Lang maintains (“The Representation of Limits,” 312), the work of Loy and Affinati only reaffirm that particular link between Italian Gentiles and Jews, one that has made the development of our contemporary literature virtually unique. Levi’s legacy resides in his reaffirmation of a link that was severed, but that we must now reconnect by whatever artistic means possible. Imaginative representation therefore, has a profoundly important task in uniting, rather than dividing, future generations. The specificity of artistic, *vis-à-vis* historical facts, should reside in the creation of speaking subjects who can, in their aesthetic endeavour, reach out and expose (linguistically or visually) areas where blank pages should have no reason to exist.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>I would like to thank my colleagues Lisa Gitelman and Julian Nelson for their careful reading of this study. I would especially thank Guido and Daniela Fink for their warm encouragement to continue my work in the direction outlined in this study. Unless otherwise noted all translations are mine.

<sup>2</sup>The biblical term *Shoah*, “a sudden disaster, individual or collective,” was used for the first time in Palestine in 1938. As Anna-Vera Sullam Calimani writes, in Palestine, poets and writers used the term afterwards, in 1942, on the occasion of a symposium on Jews in occupied Europe (*I nomi dello sterminio*, 19). After the war, it became the most commonly used term in Israel. Many contradictory opinions in merit to which term would be adopted, Holocaust, *Shoah*, genocide, make evident the oft-mentioned linguistic vacuum when facing an unseen phenomenon

<sup>3</sup>It is useful to look on the web to realize how many sites deal with the prevailing anti-Semitic feelings spreading in Europe today. Aside from the classic sources (i.e. Pierre Birnbaum’s *Antisemitism in France*), magazines such as *Vanity Fair* are publishing disturbing investigations and articles on this matter (see Brenner, “France’s Scarlet Letter”). The Center Simon Wiesenthal is preparing an official report on anti-Semitism in France and also collects signatures to protest with the French government for its failure at regarding the more than 200 incidents happened in France from 2000 on as more than “hooligans’ acts” ([www.wiesenthal.com](http://www.wiesenthal.com)).

<sup>4</sup>“just as history should not be conflated with testimony, so agency may have to go beyond witnessing to take up more comprehensive modes of political and social practice” (LaCapra, *History and Memory After Auschwitz*, 12). For an extensive treatment of this matter, see also Felman and Laub’s *Testimony*.

<sup>5</sup>For an interesting discussion of Styron's case, see Vice, *Holocaust Fiction*.

<sup>6</sup>See Bernard-Donals for an extended treatment of Wilkomirski's work, which he considers "a powerful testimony to events that are unavailable to those who were not there and that are available as open wounds to those who were" ("Beyond the Question of Authenticity," 1303).

<sup>7</sup>Affinati, "Primo Levi," 58. He also specifies the danger of utilizing memory, of the risk of turning it into a data bank to use when necessary. If this were true, Affinati claims, it would become an interior alibi.

<sup>8</sup>I am still referring to Said's rendition of Lyotard's theories on the postmodern intellectual (*Representations of the Intellectual*, 18), more prone to express his/her competence in the local than in the universal, thus refusing to engage in any debate on moral, ethical, in short, larger classes of value. We could also recall Guattari's notion of "bankruptcy of the idea of progress and modernity" that has ruined any positive idea about social action (*A Thousand Plateaus*, x), as well as the Derridean notion that, since our understanding is largely relative, all truth is consequently relative, and the rejection of metanarratives or universalistic constructs of any type is only a corollary of such notion.

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## RECENSIONI

Burrow, J. A. *Gestures and Looks in Medieval Narrative*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. xi, 200 pp. US.\$ 55 ISBN 0-521-81564-9

J. A. Burrow's book on the representation of non-verbal communication in medieval English, French, and Italian literature is an important interdisciplinary contribution to our understanding of medieval culture. Burrow deploys a substantial (though presumably lay) understanding of recent discoveries from the disciplines of biology, sociology, and psychology about the ways human beings in various cultures communicate. He brings that understanding to bear on the details of medieval narratives, linking communication theories and medieval studies in novel ways. This combination will be helpful to scholars of all of the medieval European literatures, for it provides a guide to specific kinds of non-verbal communication while also establishing the groundwork for further investigation of textual representation of non-verbal communication.

Throughout, Burrow wisely narrows his focus to signs made to convey a specific meaning—those, that is, with “*voluntas significandi*,” as Burrow terms it, following Augustine in *De Doctrina Christiana*. This still leaves him with a wide range of gestures and looks to discuss—from arms akimbo to looking askance, pointing, and smiling, to name only a few of the fifty or so signs listed in the index. In his first three chapters Burrow seeks to decode medieval references to these signs. Basing his interpretation on modern understanding of non-verbal communication and careful philological investigation, he explains how medieval readers might have pictured the gestures and looks they found described in writing and how they might have interpreted their meanings.

Burrow reminds his readers that our already culturally-determined modern understanding of such signs may differ still again from medieval understandings, but he nevertheless presents a compelling case that his readings of medieval signs are historically justified. His work is also complicated by the breadth of linguistic evidence he considers; again, Burrows convinces me that he has the details correct. Both the risk of anachronism and the complexity of lexicon firmly justify Burrow's book, for without studies such as this we are probably all too facile in our reading of medieval descriptions of non-verbal communication.

Burrow seems most comfortable with English lexicon; most of his work has been in late medieval English literature, and his training in that field is apparent throughout. Nevertheless, he is obviously a proficient reader of French and Italian texts, and he makes frequent enough reference to terms and texts in these languages that specialists will have little trouble generalizing Burrow's points and discovering further similarities and differences between English and continental gestures and looks, beyond those he has already sniffed out.

The book's final two chapters offer readings of specific texts. First, Burrow considers Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*—which he reads against its source, Boccaccio's *Il Filostrato*—and the anonymous *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.

His reading of *Troilus* and *Filostrato* is particularly welcome because it brings out the ways Chaucer adapted the text by adding and altering the gestures and looks described in it. The reading of *Sir Gawain* is equally adept and especially helpful in decoding the complexities of the non-verbal communication between Gawain and Bertilak and his wife; further discussion of the possibility that Gawain's relationship with Bertilak is to be understood as homoerotic in its gestures (a reading Burrow dismisses too quickly) would have been helpful.

Then, Burrow applies his methodology to the *Commedia Divina*. He discovers in the poem an unexpectedly rich variety of gestures and looks; in some of the encounters with the shades, he argues, the description of such non-verbal signs provides the bulk of the poem's meaning. Burrow also shows how Dante has used his technical knowledge of such signs, probably acquired from such scholastic treatises as the *De Modis Significandi* of Martin of Dacia, within the tight and compressed diction of the *Commedia*. Specifically, Burrow shows how the description of these signs sheds light on Dante's relationship with both Virgil and Beatrice. More generally, Burrow argues, the poem explores the ways that non-verbal communication facilitates or enhances human communication and the ability of visual and textual artists to depict such signs. Burrow's discussion of the "visible speech" in *Purgatorio* X is particularly revealing of the poet's negotiation of such matters.

Burrow's book will prove to be of lasting value in helping modern interpreters of these works and many others understand some of their finest points and those most open to anachronistic misinterpretation. Burrow also extends the range of interdisciplinary readings of the Middle Ages and reminds us how illuminating it can be to use the physical and social sciences to understand medieval literature.

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Azzetta, Luca. *Ordinamenti, provvisioni e riformazioni del Comune di Firenze volgarizzati da Andrea Lancia (1355-1357)*. Venezia: Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, 2001 (Memorie. Classe di Scienze Morali, Lettere ed Arti, XCIX). Pp. ix, 310.

Il titolo forse non è ingannevole, perché la parte più consistente del volume, da pagina 127 a pagina 252, è effettivamente occupata dall'edizione dei testi volgarizzati dal famoso notaio fiorentino; tuttavia è un titolo che probabilmente non invoglia il comune studioso di letteratura italiana, il quale potrebbe credere di trovarsi di fronte a un'opera per specialisti, o addirittura per iper-specialisti di storia del diritto o di storia delle istituzioni politiche o eventualmente di volgarizzamenti trecenteschi. Beninteso, c'è anche questo; anzi, se si guarda al numero delle pagine, questo è l'elemento senza confronto preponderante: perché all'edizione vera e propria dei testi occorre aggiungere il glossario (253-268) e gli indici degli antroponimi (269-270) e dei toponimi (270-310: l'esorbitante differenza di ampiezza mostra che in scritture di questo tipo le località —città, paesi, quartieri, pievi— sono molto più significative delle persone che vi abitano); ma bisogna

aggiungere anche la descrizione del manoscritto da cui si pubblica —Firenze, Archivio di Stato, *Statuti del Comune di Firenze*, 33— già Classe II. Dist. I. Num. 15. Stanza II. Armad. I — (50-59) e le preziose *Note linguistiche* (60-114), oltre ai *Criteri di edizione* (123-125; le intermedie 115-117 e 118-121, come si ricorderà ancora in seguito, sono dedicate rispettivamente ai nomi di persona e ai manoscritti e documenti d'archivio citati nell'introduzione). E si tratta di una parte che non può lasciare indifferente neppure lo studioso di letteratura italiana, dal momento che protagonista della vicenda è un volgarizzatore come Andrea Lancia, fortemente indiziato —e secondo molti non con indizi abbiamo che fare, ma con prove indubbie— di essere l'autore del cosiddetto *Ottimo commento* della *Commedia* dantesca; ma l'italianista non può restare insensibile nemmeno al fatto in sé, all'operazione per cui, a metà del Trecento, fu deciso di dare una versione anche volgare delle norme che regolavano la convivenza civile. I motivi erano essenzialmente due: da un lato l'esigenza di fare capire bene i provvedimenti adottati, anche a coloro che ormai erano classe pressoché dirigente ma non possedevano l'istruzione necessaria neppure per capire il latino notarile in cui le leggi erano redatte; dall'altro lato l'opportunità di eliminare, con la redazione in volgare, la giustificazione più ovvia e diffusa, appunto l'ignoranza del latino, per scusare le inadempienze. Va da sé che un testo trecentesco di questo tipo offre una grande varietà di lessico specialistico per materie che spesso interessano i testi letterari, e l'esempio più ovvio riguarda il capitolo sulle leggi suntuarie, particolarmente significative in anni di poco successivi alla grande peste, di cui riproduco l'inizio, compresa l'introduzione (181-182: tutti i termini interessati trovano nel glossario una illustrazione adeguata):

XXIJ. Ordinamenti contro alli soperchi ornamenti delle donne e soperchie spese de' moglazzi e de' morti.

Infrascritti sono li ordinamenti e provisioni fatti per Schiatta Ridolfi e per li compagni, honorevoli cittadini di Firenze e diputati per esso Comune a fare provisioni e ordinamenti per ripriemere e a ripriemere e punire coloro che per inanzi commetteranno homicidii o fedite nella cittade o nel contado di Firenze, et a ripriemere e regolare le soperchie spese de' cittadini dintorno alli vestimenti e adornamenti delle donne, fanciulle e femine, e moglazzi, nozze, conviti e sepolture e altre cose come di sotto per ordine si contiene, l'anno del Signore mcccclvj, per vigore del loro officio e della balia, autoritade e podestade allora data per li consigli opportuni del popolo e del Comune di Firenze; scritta per ser Piero di ser Grifo, notaio e scrivano delle dette riformagioni.

Cominciano.

In prima che neuna femina, maritata o fanciulla, di qualunque conditione sia, possa o ardisca o presumisca portare per la cittade di Firenze, in casa o fuori di casa, vestimento alcuno di sciamito che sia indorato o inarientato, né vestimento d'alcuno drappo, excetto che di sempice seta. Et per simile modo nulla femina delle predette possa o ardisca di portare, in casa o fuori di casa nella cittade di Firenze, vestimento alcuno o cappuccio o cappellina in che o sopra o nella quale sia oro o ariento o pietra pretiosa o perla o nacchera o alcuna raccamatura o figura d'alcuno animale o vaio o ermellino o coniglio o frangia. Né alcuna delle predette femine o fanciulla ardisca di portare alcuno capuccio aguazeronato o

intaglato, né alcuna robba o vestimento nastrato o fregiato, o in sul quale o nel quale sia oro o ariento o perle o pietre pretiose o alcuna figura altra ismaltata, o con ismalto o con nacchera o altra cosa.

Una rapida scorsa al glossario per 'sciamito' ('stoffa di lusso di seta pesante'), 'nacchera' ('madreperla'), 'aguazonato' ('ornato di guazoni', ossia di 'gheroni'), ma anche per 'mogliazi' ('stipulazione di contratto matrimoniale') mostra quanto sia giovevole questo volgarizzamento anche per termini che ricorrono con frequenza per esempio nella novellistica e nei poemi cavallereschi: anche perché novelle e cantari spesso non si capiscono appieno, se non vengono posti in relazione, anche per quanto riguarda l'abbigliamento, con le norme vigenti nelle diverse città<sup>1</sup>.

Tuttavia, se innegabilmente importante è il volgarizzamento in sé, il comune studioso di letteratura italiana sarà grato al curatore, Luca Azzetta, soprattutto per le pagine introduttive, da cui la figura di Andrea Lancia emerge —attraverso l'uso sagace dei documenti noti, il reperimento di altri e il ricorso, per campi di ricerca svariati, alla bibliografia più aggiornata— con un rilievo che non è solo dovuto alla sua attività di volgarizzatore, ma anche al lungo studio sull'opera di Dante e alle relazioni frequenti e solide —anche se purtroppo solo in parte ricostruibili, allo stato attuale— con protagonisti di primo piano della cultura fiorentina.

Degli argomenti trattati nell'introduzione, Azzetta si è già occupato con lavori precedenti, riguardanti i volgarizzamenti di Livio e soprattutto la biografia del Lancia (Per la biografia di Andrea Lancia, *Italia medioevale e umanistica* [39 (1996): 121-170]; qui ai vecchi contributi si aggiungono altri riscontri, che consentono di tracciare il quadro oggi più completo possibile dell'avventura umana e letteraria di un personaggio certamente minore, ma che ha intrecciato la sua attività con stelle di prima grandezza: e basterà ricordare, accanto a Dante vecchio, il maturo Boccaccio.

Non si conosce la data di nascita del Lancia: tuttavia, poiché egli era figlio di notaio e i figli o fratelli di notai per poter essere ammessi al notariato dovevano avere compiuto i diciott'anni, la data 3 giugno 1315 del più antico documento rogato dal Lancia oggi noto ci assicura che egli non può essere venuto al mondo dopo il 3 giugno del 1297 —“e non si dovrà retrocedere di molto”, commenta Azzetta a p. 10—<sup>2</sup>. Ma per noi è più significativo arrivare alle notizie certe riguardanti gli interessi letterari; e sono notizie nuove e importanti. Si deve ad Azzetta, infatti, la scoperta che il manoscritto C III 25 della Biblioteca Comunale di Siena, contenente un volgarizzamento “parziale e fortemente compendiato” di Seneca, *Epistulae ad Lucilium*, è autografo del Lancia: non solo, ma che del Lancia è anche il volgarizzamento, che si trova dunque ad aprire la serie dei lavori letterari del notaio fiorentino. L'autografia poteva essere riconosciuta solo da chi da anni lavora sulle carte del Lancia; ma è da sottolineare che, se ovviamente il fatto che un manoscritto sia autografo di qualcuno non dimostra che il copista ne sia anche autore, qui l'attribuzione è sicura. Converrà indugiare sulla questione, citando direttamente le parole dello studioso, che mi sarebbe impossibile riassumere (13):

Le caratteristiche esterne di questo codice, che non pare abbia avuto alcuna circolazione, lo qualificano subito come destinato a un uso strettamente privato:



acefalo, adespoto e anepigrafo, il testo è privo di rubriche e titoli correnti, né vi sono indicazioni che segnino il passaggio tra un'epistola e l'altra. Allo stesso modo il volgarizzamento presenta tutti i caratteri della provvisorietà e le incompiutezze proprie di una copia di lavoro: numerose infatti sono le cancellature, continue le correzioni, gli spazi lasciati in bianco, con le parole latine non tradotte poste ora in margine ora nel corpo del testo; anche le integrazioni, marginali e in interlinea, spesso si giustappongono senza sostituire precedenti scelte lessicali, così da dar vita a doppie o triple possibilità di traduzione per uno stesso termine; frequente inoltre è l'impiego da parte del Lancia di un *ductus* con tratteggio sottile, forse eseguito a dorso di penna, che indica i luoghi sui quali sarebbe dovuto tornare.

Se questo era un volgarizzamento per uso personale, ben diversa è la situazione della prova successiva —successiva, nel senso che sia stata la prima composta in seguito, almeno per quello che oggi possiamo dire— e cioè la traduzione del compendio dell'*Eneide* approntato da frate Anastasio. Si cita questo episodio, del resto già ben noto, perché è il primo che colloca il Lancia in mezzo ad altri letterati: il volgarizzamento, infatti, utilizzò la versione completa di Ciampolo degli Ugurgieri, ma a sua volta venne utilizzato da Giovanni Villani nella sua *Cronica* (ed è importante notare che il Villani, che scriveva nel 1322, fornisce la sola data sicura, almeno come termine *ante quem*, per il lavoro del notaio). Infine, quest'opera giovanile, con la ripresa di *Purg.* II 81, fornisce forse la prima prova di un culto dantesco che il notaio probabilmente aveva maturato da tempo.

Non è possibile presentare tappa dopo tappa la biografia che Azzetta offre del Lancia, attraverso un viaggio ad Avignone, una seconda missione nella città papale sul Rodano interrotta bruscamente dalla detenzione —e dalla tortura— ancor prima ch'egli potesse lasciare la Toscana, le ambascerie, le cariche ricoperte a Firenze, le relazioni con altri volgarizzatori —come il fiorentino Zuccherio Bencivenni e il pratese Arrigo Semintendi—, e con letterati minori —come Antonio Pucci, ma, a un grado senza paragone più elevato, Zanobi da Strada, Francesco Nelli, Lapo da Castiglionchio— o massimi —come Giovanni Boccaccio—; a proposito di Boccaccio, tuttavia, è doveroso sottolineare che Azzetta segnala due nuovi documenti, dal primo dei quali risulta la fortissima probabilità di una collaborazione dei due in ambito politico-amministrativo, dal secondo la certezza che tale collaborazione ha effettivamente avuto luogo. Alle pp. 33-34, infatti, prima si esibiscono documenti che mostrano la presenza di Boccaccio "nei Consigli del Comune di Firenze nei giorni 17 e 28 gennaio e 23 febbraio" 1351, quando il Lancia era consigliere, poi si porta alla luce un altro documento dal quale risulta che Boccaccio era ufficiale della gabella del pane quando del medesimo ufficio era notaio appunto il Lancia. La vicinanza intellettuale dei due, documentata fin qui in molti modi —tra l'altro anche, in epoca alta, attraverso la presenza nel *Filocolo* di prelievi dal volgarizzamento dell'*Eneide* compendiata— trova per questa via, difficile e accidentata, della ricerca d'archivio, il conforto di dati concreti e verificabili.

Naturalmente la vicinanza di Boccaccio e di Lancia propone con forza la questione antica del dantismo del Lancia e in particolare della possibilità, cui già si accennava all'inizio, che il Lancia sia l'autore dell'*Ottimo commento*.



Sulla questione, apparentemente, Azzetta non prende posizione. Nella n. 19 di p. 16 egli si limita a scrivere:

Si tratta comunque di una questione che dovrà essere riconsiderata, anche alla luce dei nuovi dati sulla biografia e sull'attività del Lancia; tuttavia, poiché il profilo che si delinea del notaio fiorentino non è affatto in contraddizione con quello dell'autore dell'*Ottimo*, nelle pagine che seguono e fino a prova contraria l'ipotesi di identificazione del Lancia con l'*Ottimo* commentatore sarà ritenuta credibile.

In realtà Azzetta mostra di accettare tale identificazione, magari "fino a prova contraria": ma si capisce che la prova in contrario è da lui ritenuta sommamente improbabile. Alla p. 36, infatti, a proposito della possibilità che il Lancia abbia favorito il culto dantesco del Boccaccio, lo studioso non esita a osservare: "Nel Lancia, dunque, ottimo commentatore...", dove la qualifica, sia pure con la minuscola, di "ottimo commentatore" è più esplicita di quello che ogni sostenitore dell'identificazione si aspetterebbe. Ma non meno chiaro è il senso di ciò che segue:

Nel Lancia, dunque, ottimo commentatore, Boccaccio ritrovava elementi per lui cari e preziosi: la familiarità con Dante, conosciuto e consultato personalmente...

Non serve continuare, perché l'allusione è a due dei passi più celebri dell'*Ottimo commento*, quelli relativi a *Inf.* X 87 e XIII 144, qui riferiti alla p. 20, che quasi ci si vergogna, in una presentazione rapida come la presente, a citare ancora una volta: "io scrittore udii dire a Dante che mai rima nol trasse a dire altro che quello ch'avea in suo proponimento; ma ch'elli molte e spesse volte faceva li vocaboli dire nelle sue rime altro che quello ch'erano appo gli altri dicatori usati di sprimere"; "elli fu di Firenze, e però qui recita una falsa opinione, che ebbero gli antichi di quella cittade, la quale io scrittore domandandoneli, udii così raccontare". Insomma, l'identificazione del Lancia con l'*Ottimo* non è esplicita, ma neppure è da mettere in dubbio. Ed essa viene confermata indirettamente dalla circostanza rilevata a p. 39: che il ms. Cologny-Genève, Bodmer 132, appartenuto al Lancia, contiene tra l'altro anche le due epistole di Pier della Vigna utilizzate dall'*Ottimo* nel suo commento a *Inf.* XIII 64-72.

Occorrerebbe a questo punto accennare in modo non cursorio alla questione dei manoscritti della *Commedia* copiati in tutto o in parte dal Lancia (soprattutto 36-38, con rinvii alla bibliografia precedente): ma l'argomento, per la sua tecnicità, esigerebbe altro spazio e soprattutto altre competenze da quelle dell'estensore di questa nota: il quale dunque volentieri rinvia il lettore alle pagine di Azzetta per un'informazione su una materia che presenta, anch'essa novità di rilievo e che consente di vedere all'opera, una volta ancora, notai come Andrea Lancia intorno al poema dantesco.

Dati i caratteri che qui si è cercato di delineare, e la piccola folla di personaggi grandi e piccoli e di manoscritti e documenti citati nell'introduzione, appare provvidenziale la decisione dell'autore di separare in modo netto i problemi trattati nella presentazione della figura del Lancia da quelli che emergono dal volgarizzamento; tale separazione è resa evidente dalla circostanza che gli indici dei nomi e dei manoscritti citati nell'introduzione si trovano alla fine dell'intro-

duzione stessa. In questo modo si semplifica e si razionalizza la materia, tenendo ben distinti i personaggi che compaiono negli Ordinamenti, nelle Provvisioni e nelle Riformagioni da quelli, che al comune studioso di letteratura italiana interessano certo di più, che ci vengono presentati nella biografia.

Luca Azzetta annuncia, come si è accennato, ulteriori sviluppi delle indagini su temi particolari che nelle pagine introduttive a questo volume ha potuto solo accennare o che non sono ancora arrivate a un punto di maturazione sufficiente per un'esposizione in sede scientifica; l'auspicio è che anche i nuovi contributi si mantengano al livello di questo volume.

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#### NOTE

<sup>1</sup> Naturalmente si tratta di testi già studiati: "Legge suntuaria fatta dal Comune di Firenze l'anno 1355 e volgarizzata nel 1356 da Andrea Lancia", pubblicata da P. Fanfani, *L'Etruria* 1 (1851): 366-382 e 429-443; A. Rossi, "I nomi delle vesti in Toscana durante il Medioevo". *Studi di lessicografia italiana* 11 (1991): 5-123. Si è scelto questo esempio non per la novità, ma per l'importanza dell'oggetto.

<sup>2</sup> Lo studioso obbliga spesso il lettore a un esercizio di ricomposizione e interpretazione dei dati: nel caso della data di nascita, per esempio, non svolge il sillogismo, ma scrive: "Nato nell'ultimo decennio del sec. XIII (*terminus ante quem* è il 1297, e non si dovrà retrocedere di molto), Andrea di ser Lancia, o *Lance*, come si firma abitualmente in latino e in volgare, compare attivo come notaio a partire dal 1315: il primo documento con data certa da lui rogato che sia sopravvissuto è costituito dall'atto di vendita ASFi —cioè Archivio di Stato di Firenze— *Diplomatico, Cestello*, 3 giugno 1315" e solo in nota aggiunge l'elemento essenziale dell'età minima richiesta a un figlio o fratello di notaio per accedere alla professione (10-11 e n. 5). Si tratta di un piccolo neo, largamente compensato da una scrittura precisa ma aperta e piana, diventata oggi rara, purtroppo, tra gli studiosi di queste discipline.

*Petrarch, Francesco. On Religious Leisure.* Ed. and trans. by Susan S. Shearer, intro. by Ronald G. Witt. New York: Italica Press, 2002. Pp. xxv, 168 US.\$15 ISBN 0-934977-11-9

This is the first English translation of Petrarch's *De otio religioso*, an exordium to the life of religious leisure and contemplation which offers the reader a fresh view into the spiritual world of fourteenth-century humanism. Composed some time during Lent 1347 (11 February to 29 March), Petrarch continued to add to the text as late as 1356 before dispatching the final treatise to his brother, Gherardo, in 1357. In his introduction to the translation, Ronald Witt outlines the changing attitudes towards '*otium*' (leisure) from pagan to medieval times in order to contextualize Petrarch's treatise on religious leisure. As in his *De vita solitaria* (1346), Petrarch sought to legitimate his manner of life by envisioning the *otium* practised in Vacluse as continuous with the *otium* first identified with the monastic life by Augustine. Witt writes: "[Petrarch] seems to have felt compelled to set

pagan *otium*, which envisioned the life of retirement as a means of reaching moral perfection, within a Christian context where it became the way of salvation" (xiv). In *De otio*, Petrarch contrasts pagan and Christian cultures, aiming to affirm the absolute condemnation of the pagans, regardless of the virtues they possessed, because of the incapacity of pagan learning "to contribute to moral reformation intrinsic to the salvific process" (xvii).

The treatise begins by praising the life of religious leisure, for only in religious leisure is the soul most receptive to God's word (3-12). After providing an extensive series of biblical quotations designed to furnish guidance and comfort to Christians (15-19), Petrarch launches into the body of the work. This he formally divides into three parts according to the three major enemies of the soul, demons (24-78), the world (81-91), and the flesh (94-112). Given that these sources of sin are so interconnected, however, there is much overlap between these three parts. The remainder of the work is devoted to a comparison of ancient pagan religion with Christianity (115-148).

Understandably the *De otio religioso*, with its all-embracing condemnation of the life in the world and a glorification of withdrawal from it, was not popular with later humanists. As well, stylistically, Petrarch's Latin is less classical than most of his other works. It is no wonder, then, as Witt points out, that the treatise has aroused little interest on the part of scholars. There is still no critical edition of it. The present translation is based on the edition by Giuseppe Rotondi (Vatican City, 1958). Susan S. Schearer has produced a very good translation of the text into modern English, the result of eight years of work. Petrarch's treatise, divided into two books, has now been further subdivided into chapters by the translator. Schearer's translation, *On Religious Leisure*, along with Witt's introduction, which provides the historical context to the treatise, will be an excellent resource for scholars and, as her stated aim, will help "amplify our understanding of Petrarch's humanism." The translation comes at a welcome time as 2004 marks the 700th anniversary of Petrarch's birth.

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*Ariosto Today. Contemporary Perspectives.* Eds. Donald Beecher, Massimo Ciavolella, Roberto Fedi. Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2003. xi, 237 pp. ISBN: 0-8020-2967-1 (cloth). \$50 Can.

This collection of essays provides critical approaches to Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* and careful analyses of his lyrics and comedies. Eleven scholars put the *Orlando Furioso* in dialogue with Ariosto's other texts and works by modern and contemporary authors. The contributors consider the *Furioso* against the backdrop of the cultural and political milieu of the Este court, where Ariosto worked most of his adult life, and the humanistic and classical literary tradition in which his production was deeply steeped. The arrangement of essays seems to imitate the cinematic techniques of panning and tracking, which, according to Monica Farnetti, one

of the scholars featured in the collection, Ariosto "foreshadowed" in the *Orlando Furioso*. While some studies offer a panoramic view of Ariosto's *opus* and its relation to the cultural and historical period, others provide close-up shots of particular texts and their intertextual allusions to the contemporary literary tradition.

Dennis Looney analyzes the influence Guarino Veronese's educational system on the "humanistic culture of the period" and more specifically on Ariosto (22). Ariosto "uses the classics and classical rhetoric to criticize the culture of the classicists" (24); this "idiosyncratic use of the classics", which Looney has termed elsewhere as "compromising," is the by-product of what the critic Albert Ascoli describes as an "implicit critique Ariosto makes of humanist education." (19). For Looney, "compromising" serves to place the literary model to which Ariosto alludes in a new perspective and to emphasize the importance of a literary source among the others, only to downsize the privilege of such source in the course of the narrative.

Antonio Franceschetti investigates the nature of the dialogue between the *Orlando Furioso* and Boiardo's *Orlando Innamorato*. Boiardo's poem is Ariosto's principal model and the source "from which the spiritual world of the *Furioso*, consciously or unconsciously, was derived" (36). Franceschetti points out that Ariosto's development and imitation of certain episodes in Boiardo leads to a radical change of tone, which loses its fantastic dimension and becomes more rational. Furthermore, Ariosto's characters are shaped by the contingent situation in which they find themselves. Love, in Boiardo the main agent of Orlando's heroic deeds in pursuit of Angelica, becomes a destructive element in Ariosto. Franceschetti attributes this metamorphosis to the historical and political period that made Ariosto increasingly pessimistic and realistic.

Alberto Casadei focuses on the structural and linguistic changes Ariosto made in the three editions of the *Orlando Furioso*, in connection to the chivalric genre and the addition of the *Cinque Canti*. While Ariosto demonstrated his preference for the Tuscan dialect in the 1516 edition (which became more evident in 1521 and 1532), in the last edition, he shed the comic and ironic dimensions and geared the work toward a more classical form which reflects his move toward a "more 'national and 'imperial' view" of his poem. This change does not make the 1532 edition completely different from the others; yet it highlights the historical and cultural change that Ferrara and the rest of Italy went through between the first and last edition.

Giorgio Masi analyzes Ariosto's production in relation to his position as a seasoned courtier and employee of the Estes. With its cultural milieu, the court of Ferrara constituted Ariosto's stimulus, inspiration and privileged audience. If Ariosto never accepted "his role as one 'familiar' to the court ahead of that of the poet" (86), he kept his independence of judgment within the limits imposed by the literary genres he chose to use and the social and cultural rules he decided to respect.

In her concise contribution Monica Ferretti emphasizes the importance of the geographical landscape in *Orlando Furioso* and of the symbolic relationship Ariosto established between space and character. Daniel Javitch calls attention to the fictionality of the *Orlando Furioso*. He points to Ariosto's elaboration of traditional elements of the chivalric genre, such as invoking the authority of the fictitious Turpin or exploiting the convention of suspending the narrative action at the



beginning of each canto, which emphasize the fictionality of the text. The narrator's comments within cantos interrupt the story and underline Ariosto's total control over the characters' fictional stories; they also induce the reader to experience through the surrogate of literature "the frustration of desires and expectations" suffered by the characters. Ultimately, the declared fictionality of the text and its intertextual nature discourages the reader from appropriating the values and ideals of the text into real life. The fickle nature of the characters underlines the unreliability of "timeless models of virtue or vice".

Elissa Weaver's well-known essay is translated here for the first time in English. Through a close study of three stories of love madness that Ariosto interlaced through the traditional technique of *entreleccamento* (Orlando's, Rodomonte's and Bradamante's), Weaver argues that madness is the product of the power of word and literature. For, the narration of stories that drive the three characters to madness can be repeated indefinitely through its retelling.

Roberto Fedi, who has written extensively on the *Rime*, analyzes Ariosto's lyric poetry that he composed, revised and expanded from 1493 to 1525 in relation to the Petrarchan *canzoniere*, its themes and structure, and the genre's elaborations made by Ferrara's court poetry in the fifteenth century and by Bembo in the sixteenth century. Working within the limits of the genre, Ariosto's endless work in progress on his *Rime* testifies to both the author's attempt to shape his lyrics according to new poetic standards and his constant reworking of "his poetic beginnings" (169). Bianchi offers a concise overview of Ariosto's comedies staged between 1508 and 1528, from the *Cassaria* to *Lena*. Bianchi traces his progressive detachment from the Latin models of Plautus and Terence in his first comedies and detects a new style in *Lena*, which is 'other' vis-à-vis the classical model (187). Bianchi suggests that through comedy Ariosto showed uneasiness in keeping up with his original goal of entertaining, offering a more pessimistic and realistic view of the society in which he lived.

The last two essays deal with the metamorphosis of the *Orlando Furioso* and its structure into Luca Ronconi's theatrical production and the integration of its narratives and structural mechanisms in Calvino's style. Sandro Bernardi describes and comments on Luca Ronconi's theatrical staging of Ariosto's poem in 1969 and its later filmic rendition. Ronconi's direction emphasizes the text's narrative openness, which led him to represent fragments of the poem because "one part stands for the entire work" (197). For Lucia Re, both Calvino and Ariosto transform their condition of belatedness into a playful "principle of originality" (227). Re explains Calvino's reading of Ariosto and Ariosto's deep influence on the author's work through his use of the opposing narrative tools of *avventura*, a search for search's sake, and *inchiesta*, a search that acquires meaning through its goal. This opposition is well known to scholars of *Orlando Furioso*.

*Ariosto Today. Contemporary Perspectives* is a great tool for any scholar seeking a panoramic view of original approaches to Ariosto's *opus* and for college professors wanting to expose students to a view of Ariosto that goes beyond the *Orlando Furioso* to his so-called minor works.

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Gallucci, Margaret A. *Benvenuto Cellini. Sexuality, Masculinity, and Artistic Identity in Renaissance Italy*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003. ISBN 1403961077. xvi, 214 Pp.

Margaret Gallucci's study of Cellini's poetics and the sexual politics of his self-creation through poetry, autobiography, letter-writing and through his art at last permits an English audience to appreciate fully the importance of his role in creating himself as a paradigm of the new masculinity that emerged in the Italian sixteenth century. In part, Gallucci has provided us with a good example of a type of scholarly investigation which I like to call the bibliographic biography. Investigations of men through the books they read and the books they created remind me of Giuseppe Arcimboldo's famous *Librarian* (c. 1566) a painting of a man who is made up entirely of books. The analogy is appropriate in Cellini's case, since he is probably more widely known through his *Autobiography* than through his relatively small repertoire of famous sculptural works, chiefly the *Perseus*. Our perception of Cellini is therefore largely as a book. Gallucci analyses the *Autobiography* to show its origins in Cellini's readings of Dante, Ariosto and Condivi's *Life of Michelangelo*. She also gives us a new way of reading Cellini's life in light of the larger context of sexual politics and the emergence of new readings of masculinity in Cinquecento Florence. To do this, Gallucci situates the *Autobiography* within the wider scope of Cellini's broader literary production, concentrating equally on the poetics of his sonnets (some newly discovered and published here for the first time).

As Gallucci points out, most of Cellini's literary output dates from the period after his second conviction for sodomy (1557). Gallucci offers extremely interesting insights into the politics of prosecution for sodomy in Renaissance Florence and suggests that Cellini's conviction on the second charge, which occurred when he was at the height of his artistic achievement under the aegis of Duke Cosimo I de' Medici, was chiefly a political statement on the part of the Duke. Cellini's conviction proved that Cosimo was willing to regulate this kind of sexual transgression and, by commuting the sentence to house arrest rather than imprisonment, that the Duke was able to use the same occasion as an opportunity to demonstrate his clemency. Gallucci argues that it was partially Cellini's perception of the injustice of this conviction, which robbed him of the Duke's favour and thrust him into relative artistic obscurity, that drove him to poetry. This was the impetus for his *Autobiography*. Cellini also became the author of highly inventive refigurations of Petrarchan canons in the defence of homosexual love. Gallucci argues that the frequent references to sodomy found in the *Autobiography* can also be read as a defence of his transgressive sexual practices, thereby redefining the *Autobiography* as a tract that evolved as a kind of legal defence against the sexual policies of the State. Since the danger of self-invention via autobiography is that it almost always subverts all hope for truth, Gallucci's book is extremely valuable in defining the 'true' circumstances of the identity that Cellini invented for himself, forged from the circumstances of proscriptions for sexual behaviour, particularly male sexual behaviour, in the complex artistic culture of Renaissance Florence.

Cellini's mere indulgence in sonnet writing was also a self-conscious attempt

to equalize his own relationship to the well-documented and highly praised poetic output of his more famous contemporary, Michelangelo. Moreover, other Florentine painters associated with the Medici court at this time were also sonnet writers, most notably Bronzino, who also created complex and witty sexual allegories (most famously the *Venus, Cupid, Time and Folly*, National Gallery, London) for the delectation of precisely the same circle of privileged clients and contemporaries for whom Cellini worked, chiefly Francis I and the circle of Fontainebleau. The tenor of much of Cellini's poetic output compares favourably with such luxurious sexual conundrums and also with the work of the equally sexually voluble Pietro Aretino, whom Cellini seems very much to have admired.

Gallucci's analysis of Cellini's writing as a form of legal argumentation is convincing. In his poetry, Cellini subverts Petrarchan conventions, normally used to express heterosexual love, to defend the practice of sodomy between men, thus articulating his defence of his own practices, and he also used his sonnets to launch attacks against artistic rivals like Vasari and Bandinelli, writing verses accusing them of sodomy. The master of the bon mot and double entendre lost no opportunity to skewer his contemporaries. Certainly much of the *Autobiography* is concerned with artistic rivalry, as Cellini asserts his superior talent as a goldsmith over contemporaries like Caradosso Foppa, Tobbia and Pompeo (curiously enough, all Milanese). It was Pompeo that he stabbed to death, for which he was forgiven by the Pope who proclaimed that "men like Benvenuto, unique in their profession, stand above the law," a clear statement of artistic and legal superiority that goes far to characterize the *Autobiography* as a form of legal defence (Symonds translation of *The Life of Benvenuto Cellini*, London, 1905, p. 144). In terms of artistic rivalry, the fact that Cellini later turned his attention to the creation of treatises on goldsmithing and on architecture could well have been motivated by the high seriousness of Giorgio Vasari's treatise writing. Certainly by the late sixteenth century, treatise writing had become a general mania among the artistic elite—witness Serlio, Bertani, and Palladio just to name three. Moreover, Vasari's success at the Medici court must certainly have prompted Cellini to attempt new avenues to regain his artistic standing.

Gallucci is at her best in Chapter Five, "Honor and Manliness," when she discusses Cellini's self-invention not only in terms of his poetics, but rather in terms of his knowing manipulation of the perception of masculinity in early modern Florentine society. As Gallucci points out, in modern popular culture, Cellini has often been depicted as a waggish, roguish sort, a veneer of feminine charm disguising a capacity for masculine heroics, a popular heroic type in Hollywood cinema of the '30s, the same era that popularized the *Scarlet Pimpernel* (*The Affairs of Cellini* was made in 1934, *The Scarlet Pimpernel* in 1935—Gallucci uses the example of Errol Flynn in *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, 1938). Gallucci makes the important point that this duality emerged as an acceptable and successful vehicle for self-fashioning in courtly society, which required "men like Cellini to be both a feminine courtier and a masculine defender of honor" (141). The sixteenth century was a time of courtesy manuals that regulated every aspect of public behaviour, and the mannered life at court could easily lead to accusations of effemina-

cy. Eventually the duel arose as a socially acceptable expression of controlled male violence. Cellini, and later Caravaggio and Marlowe, who had similar temperaments, probably to some extent countered overt societal control, and the need to court patrons, with spontaneous displays of 'swashbuckling' manly behaviour. Thus, Gallucci effectively shows that, by the sixteenth century, the concept of masculinity was itself continually under revision, and that Cellini was "in the forefront in articulating a new norm of manhood" (113). Gallucci's excellent analysis of the evolving social consciousness about masculinity in Cinquecento Florence, as articulated in her examination of Cellini's literary oeuvre, should undoubtedly influence future readings of his artistic production. Moreover, this book will provide future scholars with greater insights into the 'reading' of artistic representations of sexuality and masculinity in this period.

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*Art History in the Age of Bellori: Scholarship and Cultural Politics in Seventeenth-Century Rome.* Eds. Janis Bell and Thomas Willette. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002. xvi, 396 pp.; 106 b/w illustrations. ISBN: 0-5217-8248-1. \$90 US.

Giovanni Pietro Bellori was surely the most significant and influential of all seventeenth-century historians of art in Italy. Most famous for his highly selective biographies of contemporary artists (*Le vite de' pittori, scultori et architetti moderni*, 1672), Bellori produced (as author, co-author, or editor) some twenty-five additional works on subjects ranging from ancient medals to the Vatican frescoes of Raphael. This interesting collection of essays by an array of international scholars has its origins in a conference held in 1996 at the American Academy in Rome marking the tercentenary of Bellori's death. Together with the grand 2000 exhibition in Rome and its resulting catalogue, *L'idea del bello: viaggio per Roma nel Seicento con Giovan Pietro Bellori* (ed. Evelina Borea and Carlo Gasparri), it is evidence of Bellori's continuing importance in seventeenth-century studies.

Given his importance, it is unfortunate that Bellori is often read only by specialists in seventeenth-century art. The essays in this volume are, frankly, also primarily for the specialist, though Janis Bell has provided an extremely useful introduction that begins with an overview of Bellori's life and scholarship, followed by a lengthy but engrossing summary of his critical reception from the seventeenth century to the present. This helps greatly to situate the eleven essays in the book in historical and critical context, and to illuminate their overarching themes. Together, the participating authors have attempted to consider the relationships between Bellori's differing fields of scholarly activity (antiquarianism and the history and criticism of contemporary art), and to reveal how his personal affiliations and career goals shaped his art criticism. One of the most intriguing aspects of the essays is, in fact, the erosion of the myth of Bellori's much-vaunted objectivity and impartiality, characteristics that led to his being so widely respected as a historian.

The essays are divided into two sections, titled "Bellori and the Republic of Letters in Seventeenth-Century Rome" and "Bellori's *Lives*: History, Criticism, Theory."

The first section concentrates on Bellori's antiquarian activities and publications. Giovanna Perini's frequently amusing essay, "Belloriana methodus," presents evidence that Bellori practiced a highly "selective fidelity" to the scholarly method of his mentor, Francesco Angeloni; and that he used historiography as a "means of obtaining and consolidating his own personal power" (63), particularly as a promoter of cultural policies that had been established in Paris by Colbert and Louis XIV. Her essay may, however, have been an unfortunate choice to open the book, as it relies rather heavily on the assumption that the reader is a Bellori expert, and completely familiar with the complex French cultural milieu as well. The following, more accessible, essay by Louis Marchesano examines the (often negative) historical reception of Bellori's antiquarian writings to show that Bellori's brand of antiquarianism was a cornucopian one based on the concept of civil discourse, ideal for circles of noble collectors, where digression and erudition were prized above the systematic approach to the objects' chronology or context.

Ingo Herklotz provides a detailed investigation of Bellori's 1672 publication on Trajan's Column, showing that many of the engravings by Pietro Santi Bartoli suffer from the same inaccuracies as earlier engravings, thus disproving the publisher De Rossi's claim that Bartoli had closely examined the frieze and made new drawings of all 2,500 figures. Herklotz also points out that Bellori's participation in producing such lavishly illustrated volumes, and his choosing to write his commentary in the vernacular, was aimed at a popular market, and that this was one of his major contributions as an antiquarian. In discussing Bellori's 1685 book on ancient portrait medals, the *Vetustum illustrium ... imagines*, Eugene Dwyer similarly shows that Bellori and Bartoli relied to a large extent on much earlier publications, and that the book was valued by collectors (such as Mariette) for its tasteful packaging, novel arrangement and beautiful engravings, even as they acknowledged that it contained few archaeological discoveries. Dwyer reveals that Bellori also apparently made several additions to the iconographical corpus in order to curry favour with prominent collectors, among them Queen Christina of Sweden, whom he served as her antiquarian and librarian. Bellori's service to Queen Christina is also the subject of Tomaso Montanari's essay, an exploration of the many complexities involved in situations of patronage. For Bellori was not merely her librarian: he also created an academy at the Queen's palazzo "to revive Roman sculpture from the torpor into which it had fallen" after Bernini's death (108); he helped to produce a post mortem inventory of the Queen's medal collection; and he may, as Dwyer argues, have helped Christina plan a series of about one hundred medals celebrating her life. In the last of the six essays in this part of the book, Hetty E. Joyce shows that Bellori's study of recently discovered ancient frescoes in the Nasonii funerary monument was related to his criticism of contemporary art, especially the descriptions of the Farnese Gallery frescoes in his *Life of Annibale Carracci*.

Joyce's contribution is also related to the contents of Part Two of the book, whose five essays all deal in some way with Bellori's most studied volume, the *Lives of the Artists*. Claire Pace and Janis Bell argue that Bellori's engraved portraits of the



artists and the facing allegorical headpieces to the biographies were inspired by his antiquarian studies of ancient portrait medals and their reverses; and further, that Bellori intended this combination to convince his readers that artists were deserving of the same recognition accorded to revered statesmen and philosophers of the ancient past. The authors recognize that Bellori's use of allegorical motifs is related to the frames surrounding artists' woodcut portraits in the 1568 edition of Vasari's *Lives of the Artists*, which include personifications of painting, sculpture and architecture. However, they do not mention that Vasari's own enterprise of publishing the portraits, which are oval in shape, was also indebted to ancient medals and that his purpose was exactly the same as Bellori's: to glorify artists as heroes. Pace and Bell present a detailed iconographical analysis of each of the headpieces, finding allusions in them to previous works of art from antiquity to Raphael. Not all of these identifications are completely convincing; in some cases alternative sources might be suggested. On the other hand, some of their interpretations are illuminating, such as the association of Caravaggio's allegory, labelled *Praxis*, with perspective manuals showing how to transfer images onto curved surfaces: they explain that the headpiece "is not about practice in the sense of facility, but rather about the techniques of creating pictures without theory" (218). This is very much in keeping with Bellori's criticisms of Caravaggio in the *Lives*.

The following three essays address Bellori's descriptions in the biographies of works of art. Martina Hansmann discusses Bellori's systematic approach and his employment of different types of description depending on the theme and importance of each painting. She also shows how Bellori's approach parallels that of some theoreticians in the French Academy (such as Félibien), where the careful description of paintings was also seen as an important starting point for analytical investigations. Anthony Colantuono presents a nuanced investigation of Bellori's use of the word "scherzo," which can mean a game or jest, but was also a specialized term in Italian poetics signifying a type of *concetto* with an especially playful quality. Further, Bellori often employs the term, as did seventeenth-century literary critics, to indicate a short *concetto* based upon classical Greek epigrams, for example in his descriptions of images by Poussin and Duquesnoy. In her essay, Janis Bell looks closely at Bellori's description of Domenichino's *Last Communion of St. Jerome* to show that his views on colour were completely in line with his general concept of classicism and idealization: the artist should select judiciously from nature and avoid extremes. For this chapter, it is unfortunate that colour illustrations are not provided.

The final essay by co-editor Thomas Willette shows how even after Bellori's death, his book continued to be used for the purposes of cultural politics. He examines the origins and significance of the 1728 edition of the *Lives* published in Naples by Francesco Ricciardi, which included a newly-written biography of the Neapolitan painter Luca Giordano – a painter Bellori would almost certainly not have included in his canon of great artists, and who was included in this edition for the nationalistic purpose of promoting the cultural history of Naples.

As these summaries suggest, the essays in the volume are restricted in focus, so much so that it helps if the reader comes to them with a good knowledge of



Bellori to begin with. At the same time, however, they are also full of useful information for anyone interested in seventeenth-century cultural politics and systems of patronage, or in the history of antiquarianism. Scholars interested in Bellori himself will find them especially useful in illuminating the relationships between Bellori's varied fields of activity and his complex relationships with patrons, collectors, artists, and theoreticians.

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Scalabrini, Massimo. *L'incarnazione del macaronico. Percorsi nel comico folenghiano*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 2003. Pp. xix, 190. ISBN 88-15-09455-5. 15 Euro.

"Phantasia mihi plus quam phantastica venit / historiam Baldi grassis cantare Camoenis," scrive Teofilo Folengo in apertura del *Baldus* (Torino: Einaudi, 1989, libro primo, vv. 1-2, 2), capolavoro rinascimentale che ancora attende di trasformarsi da spettrale a 'reale presenza' del canone letterario italiano. Di questa 'fantastica fantasia' si occupa l'originale, interessante e colto lavoro di Massimo Scalabrini, il cui coraggio intellettuale dovrà essere particolarmente sottolineato se si considera come abbia scritto questo lavoro su un aspetto importante dell' 'altra' tradizione italiana, quella che dai suoi esordi sino ad oggi sfida il dominio della retorica 'in lingua,' nell'ambito della accademia letteraria nordamericana, ancor oggi spesso sclerotizzata in stanchi e ripetitivi esami delle tre corone e dei più conosciuti e 'sicuri' autori del canone, quelli che con più certezza assicurano un lavoro universitario. L'ambizioso scopo del volume di Scalabrini è, come si legge nell'introduzione, di investigare "la teologia del comico" espressa dalla produzione letteraria di Folengo, che non si limiti al suo testo più conosciuto ma anzi lo metta in dialogo con le opere in italiano e in latino dello stesso scrittore (17). Scalabrini giustamente insiste come attraverso un esame di Folengo si possa determinare "la genealogia macaronica della moderna vocazione al 'misto'" (15). Lo studioso crede identificare "nell'evento incarnazionale (nell' "umanazione" del Verbo giovanneo) insieme il motivo e la matrice della poetica contaminatoria," poiché, secondo Scalabrini, "la poetica del macaronico folenghiano va posta in relazione con l'emergere e affermarsi, tra Quattrocento e Cinquecento, di un orientamento teologico teso a sottolineare l'incarnazione e l'umanità" di Cristo (16). Che l'incarnazione del Verbo possa essere la fonte originale della vocazione letteraria italiana al "misto" è ipotesi di grande interesse, anche se ulteriori analisi sarebbero necessarie per confermare o smentire se ne sia sempre stata e ne sia ancora il "motivo" formante. In ambito contemporaneo, ad esempio, un'indiscutibile connotazione religiosa è presente in Testori, scrittore che Scalabrini evita di citare, oltre che Pasolini, ma sarà più arduo da provare ad esempio in Fo. Ma varrà la pena ricordare come "Teofilo" sia il nome che Girolamo Folengo scelse quando nel 1509 pronunciò i voti nel convento benedettino di Sant'Eufemia, nei pressi di Brescia.

I capitoli di maggiore interesse del lavoro in questione sono il primo ed il secondo. Nel primo, dal titolo "Puer Macaronicus" (19-46), con grande sapienza e

cultura l'autore porta alla superficie gli echi letterari (soprattutto numerosi cantari medievali, ma anche l'Orlandino, altro testo in italiano dello stesso Folengo) e soprattutto teologici presenti nella descrizione della nascita di Baldus, descritta nella seconda parte del secondo libro e nella prima del terzo, che apertamente echeggia la narrativa della natività. Rielaborando una dichiarazione di Bachtin concernente i canoni letterari dell'età classica, Scalabrini ricorda come "la scelta dell'infanzia e dei suoi referenti grotteschi ... equivale ... a una decisiva presa di posizione poetica," a dire, "la promozione di quanto è solitamente relegato nel dominio dell'incompiuto, dell'eccessivo e del facile alla sfera di ciò che domanda di essere espresso" (23-24). Pagine molto coinvolgenti sono dedicate al riso del neonato ("Ille nihil plorat, sed vultu grignat alegro") che l'autore vede connesse a delle riscritture della natività cristiana presenti in alcune leggende apocrife, oltre che alla quarta ecloga di Virgilio (Folengo, Baldus, libro secondo, v. 470, 72) Il riso del Baldus neonato costituisce, secondo l'autore, "la scoperta centrale della poesia folenghiana dell'infanzia" ed è "il lascito forse più prezioso affidato dal grande macaronico alla tradizione (e dell'ermeneutica) del comico" (46).

Il secondo capitolo (47-82) esamina la figura di Cingar, compagno di Baldus, che l'autore legge alla luce delle sue fonti letterarie, soprattutto la figura topica di Margutte attraverso il Pulci, Boiardo e Ariosto, ma anche il Momus di Alberti. La centralità del personaggio di Cingar risiede, come lo studioso mette bene in risalto, nella sua natura emblematica di "reietto," dello "straniero privo di protezione" (67). Nel terzo capitolo dal titolo "Palpabili voci," Scalabrini pone il tema dell'infanzia presente nel Baldus in dialogo con altre opere di Folengo, ad iniziare dalla Palermitana ma includendo anche il successivo Umanità del Figliuolo di Dio. In questa parte, grazie a queste letture incrociate, Scalabrini prova una sua convincente intuizione riguardante la "vocazione del macaronico folenghiano." Lo studioso afferma che tale "vocazione" riguarda un "meditare sull'umanità pre-soggettiva e pre-linguistica dell' *infans*, il cui paradigma è naturalmente il Cristo bambino" (88). Scalabrini sintetizza la sua ricerca in questo campo affermando che "la poesia del mantovano dispiega un'attenzione sistematica all' 'Umanità del Figliuolo di Dio,' più volte ne contempla, in particolare, il momento della nascita" (107). Interessante, ma meno probante e necessario, è il seguente esame del concetto del "toccare con mano" (124) che l'autore allarga ad altri scrittori rinascimentali (le commedie di Ariosto, Machiavelli, Aretino, Della Porta e Giordano Bruno), esame che occupa una sezione del quarto capitolo e che sembra esulare dalla convincente analisi della poetica di Folengo (124-35).

In conclusione, il lavoro di Massimo Scalabrini si propone quale colto ed innovativo studio su un autore ed un fenomeno letterario di centrale importanza per la cultura italiana, non solo rinascimentale.

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Aleramo, Sibilla. *Una donna*. Nuova ed. Prefazione di Anna Folli, postfazione di Emilio Cecchi. Milano: Feltrinelli, 2003. Pp. xxi + 172.

Folli, Anna. *Penne leggere. Neera, Ada Negri, Sibilla Aleramo. Scritture femminili fra Otto e Novecento*. Milano: Guerini e Associati, 2000. Pp. 253.

*Io ho dinanzi a me il futuro, anche se voi non lo credete.* These words of Sibilla Aleramo open the preface to the most recent edition of *Una donna*, the forty-eighth since its first appearance in 1906 (STEN of Torino). It was considered by Aleramo herself to be a true classic and she marked her literary birth by the date of its first publication (3 November). The words are telling in several ways. They revisit the attitude demonstrated by Aleramo, no longer only Rina Pierangeli Faccio, no longer only daughter of Ambrogio and Ernesta, no longer wife, and, scandalously, no longer just mother of Walter. But they also describe the approach taken by literary critic Anna Folli in her introductory essay. Mentored by Antonia Arslan, Folli is of a new generation of Italian literary critics; she is highly knowledgeable of the imposing and ineluctable critical tradition established in the late nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth century by literary judges such as Croce, Binni, Sapegno. At the same time, she is unafraid of surpassing the tradition, or even thwarting it, as she approaches her subject boldly, confidently, providing the reader along the way with an overwhelming wealth of critical information, and of personal reflection that one does not read in her predecessors.

Often the introductory essay to a novel is overlooked in order to arrive faster at the pages of the novel itself. In this case, it is well worth stopping for a brief period to enjoy the essay itself. In its 15 pages, Folli manages to provide important background information for the novel and also points of departure for reflective thought as we read the novel. Here the point that she asks us to consider is "*la death in life* dei romantici, contro la quale [Aleramo] combattè pur sempre sublimandola in miracolo d'amore e sacrificio" (xxi). Seen in this way, not scandalous, not feminist, but human, Aleramo's work and life are enriched by a new perspective.

This highly readable introductory essay brought me to another recent work of literary criticism by Anna Folli, *Penne leggere*. Again, as in the prefatory essay to *La Donna*, Folli enters immediately into the thick of things, compelling us from the outset to consider, and reconsider, what it means to write critically of literature by women: "A chi si occupa di scrittrici capita sempre di incontrare qualcuno che chiede se la letteratura femminile esiste. Sorvolando sui presupposti della domanda, si preferisce rispondere che la definizione è astratta; meglio restringersi al dato culturale che esistono libri, testi, scritti da donne. Anzi bisogna farlo, anche solo al ricordo della fortuna di quelle formule inventate da Luciano Zùccoli, all'inizio del secolo: *il pericolo roseo, il gaietto sciame...*" (p.11). Folli challenges us to accept these cultural givens; if we do, then we can approach the books, the texts and the writings by women without succumbing to the temptation of Zùccoli's saccharine epithets.

In each of the three sections of her work, Folli impresses with her panoramic view of the lives and works of Neera, Negri, and Aleramo respectively. In her critical approach she is much closer to the traditions of Anglophone literary critics than to those of traditional Italian studies. She casts her net widely; no detail of the lives or

works of her three subjects seems to escape her. One must laud the assiduous hunt for confirmation and for corroboration which she undertakes. Her studies have taken Folli to the more obscure file folders of various archives, to much unpublished but seminal material, all of it carefully annotated. I offer as one example her study of Ada Negri's awareness of and admiration for Walt Whitman. In reading, one feels that Folli has been able to reproduce very closely through Ada's letters and comments, and through quotations of the American poet, how Negri must have appreciated Whitman. Here, as throughout *Penne leggere*, the footnotes are ample, informative, and give original information. Above all, they are interesting to read and to consider. If there is one criticism that might be made of this study, it is precisely that the notes are so rich in detail that they threaten to take over the text. For example, her long discussion of the interaction between Gabriele D'Annunzio and Angelo Conti in the section on Sibilla Aleramo takes many pages to get to the point, pages in which Aleramo is absent and which leave the reader wondering why they were included. But if we are patient, the answer to our query is there. The impression left by such a generous wealth of material is that, in the end, the women focussed upon in this study were not writing in feminine, or even feminist, isolation. We forget perhaps that they were formidable figures in their own time, not only in literature but in journalism, politics, and social reform. They were widely read, and succeeded in establishing for themselves what today would be called extensive networks and connections; they were talked about as influential colleagues by other writers, male and female alike, and not only within the confines of Italian borders.

In conclusion, just a brief note on the style of the *Penne leggere*. Folli has successfully provided a serious study without falling into the trap of overt didacticism. Her book is highly readable and engaging. At the same time, as academics and students we are truly grateful for her generosity in sharing her detailed notes and resources. Her confidence in knowing her material so well does not overshadow her delight in her research "finds"; the latter she conveys in her book without recourse to pedantic rhetoric. Quite to the contrary, her style invites the reader to discover along with her and to reflect on how the numerous threads that she presents in describing each author, finally tie together to give us a comprehensive view of the lives and the writings of Neera or Negri or Aleramo. Altroché leggere!

In her comment above, Aleramo referred to the future of writing. If in this study we have an example of the future of Italian literary criticism, then it does auger well.

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Cesaretti, Enrico. *Castelli di carta. Retorica della dimora tra Scapigliatura e Surrealismo*. Ravenna: Longo, 2001. Pp. 159. ISBN 8-8806-3284-1.

This book is an excellent re-examination of the literary and historical contribution of the late nineteenth-century movement known as "Scapigliatura." Though the work of Emilio Praga, Carlo Dossi, Ugo Tarchetti, and Arrigo Boito has been the subject of considerable critical attention over the last one hundred years or so, largely in the context of Italian Decadentism, Enrico Cesaretti revises the tradi-



tional reading of this group's reaction to positivist thought and to traditional literary form by interpreting the centrality of the "dimora" or dwelling *topos* in the representation of a spatiality that has implications for our understanding not only of the Italian literary canon and the twentieth-century avant-garde, but also of post-Unification social and political realities.

In Part 1, titled "Dissacrazioni scapigliate," the author uses the work of Tzvetan Todorov (*The Fantastic: a Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, 1973) and Yuri Lotman (*Tipologia della cultura*, 1987) as a theoretical framework for exploring the relationship between "topology" and "tropology" as it pertains to *Memorie del presbiterio. Scene di provincia*, a novel co-authored by Praga and Roberto Sacchetti. Cesaretti focuses on such places as the presbytery, church, or garden and he identifies episodes in which figures representing ecclesiastical authority indulge in transgressive behaviour, that is, acts of "dissacrazione" that defile those spaces. At the same time, the author detects in the description of these incidents a certain nostalgia or desire for a more ethical conduct, a yearning for a spiritual ideal—at least on the part of the narrator. From here, Cesaretti goes on to locate this duality or antithesis in works by other "scapigliati" and to identify several instances in which characters abandon "dimore" that are no longer livable and search for more suitable dwelling places. In this endless quest for the "Promised Land," Cesaretti sees the emergence of a modernist sense of spiritual alienation. He also develops a parallel interpretation by suggesting that the dual process of "desecration" and "secularization" is a critical response to Italian society's attempts to demolish the past as it transformed itself into a modern state. For the "scapigliati" the result of such a process is a loss of orientation: "La logica spaziale del romanzo [...] delinea gli aspetti di una cultura che procede verso la desacralizzazione senza poter dimenticare il sacro e che si secolarizza senza poter fare a meno di elementi cristiani" (43).

Since the author's intention is to establish a thematic continuum from the literature of the late 1800s to the Futurist and Surrealist movements in the first two decades of the 1900s, "Verso le avanguardie," the second part of the book, is intended to function as a bridge. In other words, Cesaretti locates texts in which the "spaesamento scapigliato" is given literal and metaphorical expression as departure from a given "dimora." To this end, he considers the work of G.P. Lucini, which the author offers as a "punto d'incontro fra scapigliati e futuristi" (64), the short stories of Luigi Gualdo, a "secondo *trait d'union* sia con l'atmosfera simbolista-decadente di fine secolo che con la narrativa del ventesimo secolo" (66), and certain passages from D'Annunzio's novel *Il piacere*, where the occurrence of a "profanazione di uno spazio" (73) links up with the main argument in the first part of *Castelli di carta*. It should be noted, however, that this particular segment is almost exclusively stylistic or structuralist in its approach; the social and political dimensions of the "retorica della dimora" appear to have been set aside.

In a self-effacing statement appearing in Part 3, titled "Demolizioni e ricostruzioni futuriste," the author states that his aim is not to redefine Futurism, but rather to identify in that complex cultural movement, "i segni relativi ad un immaginario della 'dimora'" (81). He examines the treatment of certain interior spaces in Marinetti's *Vengono. Dramma d'oggetti* and *Lo spazio vivente* in terms of



the theories of Emanuel Lévinas, Gaston Bachelard, and Martin Heidegger with respect to the concept of “inhabiting” a place. Cesaretti does well to reconcile the Futurist embrace of movement, dynamism, and indeed violence, with the notion of nomadism or abandonment of places felt to be inauthentic and unlivable. Nevertheless, this premise tends to lead him quite far afield, for example, into some of the writings of such figures as Maeterlink, Maria Ginanni, and St Theresa of Avila. These forays into the realm of the fantastic, the dreamlike, and the mystical are served up as plausible corollaries of the Futurists’ problematization of the notion of “dimora” with its “tendenza verso la spiritualizzazione” (92). At this point, the crucial role of the “scapigliati” as precursors of certain aspects of Futurism and Surrealism is a bit tenuous and the author acknowledges this in writing: “mi rendo conto, non senza sgomento, di aver citato [...] personaggi fondamentalmente diversi e lontani fra loro sia spazialmente che temporalmente: il medievale instauratore della ‘topologia mistica,’ una mistica rinascimentale spagnola, una ‘futurista anomala’ operante a Firenze, un simbolista belga” (93). The fact that he explains their presence in this chapter on the grounds that they all reflect on an important issue in human existence does not entirely justify the diminished focus.

In the concluding Part 4, “Surrealismo e dintorni,” Cesaretti first provides an overview of the problem of definition associated with the term “Surrealism,” especially in the context of Italian literature and art. He, then, moves on to apply the interpretation of the “dimora” as both a destructive and a constructive practice. He takes as his operational definition the process whereby reality is subverted or subjected to what Cesaretti calls a “de-realizzazione del quotidiano” (102) for the purpose of uncovering what lies beyond the rationality or objectivity of the sensible world. The establishment of a line of continuity with the “Scapigliatura” relies essentially on the Freudian concept of the “unheimlich,” which is to say the uncanny or the strange. Accordingly, the trajectory runs from a “heimlich” or familiar setting to, “un sempre più invadente ‘unheimlich’ che ha inizio in alcuni aspetti della sensibilità letteraria scapigliata” (104). The focus of this section is on aspects of *La casa ispirata* (1925) and *Hermaphrodito* (1974), novels by Alberto Savinio, as well as some writings by Tommaso Landolfi. Playing off against Freud’s and Derrida’s opinions on repetition and its implications in terms of the subconscious, Cesaretti relates this narrative to his original thesis of antithetical authorial attitudes towards the “dimora” (i.e. demolition and reconstruction): “pur essendo ‘solida e quadrata’, stabile, è anche precaria e dunque destinata a non rimanere ‘sul mondo mutante e medesimo [...] fra le case degli uomini’” (122-23).

To conclude, by taking as his starting point the “visione anti-borghese” expressed by the “scapigliati” as an almost schizophrenic attitude toward the “dimora,” the author takes into consideration an impressive array of writers from Heidegger, Derrida, Freud, and Jung, to Kafka, Pirandello, De Chirico, and Carrà. In the process, Enrico Cesaretti takes the reader on a fascinating and insightful journey through Italian modernism.

Minghelli, Giuliana. *In the Shadow of the Mammoth: Italo Svevo and the Emergence of Modernism*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002. Pp. 238.

Giuliana Minghelli's book represents a noteworthy shift in perspective in the English-speaking criticism of Italo Svevo. Unlike her predecessors, P.N. Furbank, Brian Moloney, Naomi Lebowitz, Charles Russel, and Beno Weiss, who were primarily interested in exploring Italo Svevo's work through biographical lens, Minghelli's approach to Svevo is mainly through theoretical investigative tools. The constant focus on what was called the "Italo Svevo case," a trend that dominated Svevo studies for many years, may be accounted for by a variety of factors, such as the scarcity of biographical details in the English-speaking world, the fascinating intricacies of Svevo's *frontier identity*, and the spectacular turn of his literary fate. This general interest in the novelist's biography reached its peak in 1988 when John Gatt-Rutter claimed to be writing *the Svevo biography* with his *Italo Svevo: A Double Life*. More than a decade later, as the "white areas" on the Svevo map had long been covered, his critics eventually resolved to adopting a fresh perspective in approaching Svevo's work and, therefore, resorting to theories that had become quite successful in literary studies. Giuliana Minghelli's contribution has the merit of being the first book-length study that applies a post-structuralist reading to Svevo's work.

The book is divided into two major sections that roughly correspond to a distinction between theory and practice. Thus, in the *Introduction* and in the first two chapters Minghelli outlines her theoretical premises, while in chapters three to six she provides a textual analysis of Svevo's representative writings: the three novels, several short stories, two plays, and some autobiographical texts. Minghelli's rereading of Svevo contains at its crux the metaphor of the *shadow of the mammoth*, seen as the locus where the "allegory of symbiosis," namely "the crucial poetic and philosophical moment in [Svevo's] writing" (4) unfolds. It is in this shadow that the communion between the vulnerable yet restless man and the *other* develops. The novelty of Minghelli's study lies in the exploration of this area where intersubjective contaminations not only of genders, but also of nationalities and races, as signposts of modernity, occur. By rethinking the areas that have been generally overlooked by traditional criticism, Minghelli's objectives are as follows: (i) to reassess the status of the Svevian woman, so far largely stereotyped as a mere object of male desire, by revealing her involvement in the allegory of symbiosis; (ii) to reconsider the much criticized lack of gender or racial purity in Svevo's male characters; (iii) to investigate the intersubjective space existing between the man and the other, that is, the interval where gender transgression takes place; (iv) to re-evaluate the nature of Svevo's participation in the modernist project.

Minghelli's re-evaluation of Svevo relies heavily on two rather unknown fables that the novelist wrote around 1910, long before he became famous: "La corruzione dell'anima" and "L'uomo e la teoria darwiniana." In the first chapter of the book, "Between Darwinian Origins and Modernist Ends: Svevo's Allegory of Symbiosis," Minghelli puts forward a thorough investigation of these fables, projecting her reading against a background dominated mostly by Darwin and Nietzsche. To Minghelli, the most notable consequence of rereading the two fables

lies in the revision of the interpretative canon that this addition triggers: thus, Svevo's work does not entail the manifestation of the "ironic hero of modernism" (35), but the less visible, yet extant, process of constructing the self through symbiotic interaction with the other.

In the second chapter of the book, "Of Artists, Women, and Jews: Svevo and the Modernist Contamination," Minghelli re-evaluates what critics have called the "feminization" of the classical subject, so visible in the Svevian male protagonists. The chapter presents Minghelli's quarrel with one of the most seminal readings of Svevo, Giacomo Debenedetti's famous essay "Svevo e Schmitz," published as early as 1929. Debenedetti's interpretation, according to Minghelli, is biased not only by a marked nostalgia for omniscient authors, carefully knitted plots and strong, well-defined characters, in short for nineteenth-century narratives, but also by the growing authority of Fascist rhetoric. Instead of performing a genuine analysis of the modernist elements in Svevo, Debenedetti developed his argument into a different direction by turning to what Minghelli calls a "discourse of race" which, associated with a "discourse of gender," sought to elucidate and counteract Svevo's uncomfortable theme of mutual contamination through recourse to the writer's biography. Thus, in accordance with the Weiningerian logic, namely, that the woman and the Jew are equally inferior by comparison to the Arian man, Debenedetti denounced the feminine essence of all Svevian male characters. Contrary to Debenedetti's belief in an obvious similarity between Weininger and Svevo, Minghelli sides with Anderson's powerful statement: "Svevo represents everything Weininger wrote against" (63).

In the second half of the book (chapters three to six), Minghelli switches from theory to practice and proposes a reading of Svevo's major texts in light of her own theoretical insights. Although meticulously carried out, her textual analyses do not reach the same intensity as the theoretical exposition outlined in the preceding chapters. All too often, Minghelli chooses to retell in her own words the Svevian scenes that she is about to interpret, a habit that makes some passages sound prosaic. A sort of lexical pedantry also surfaces in the text to the point of becoming annoying. While in the theoretical sections of the book, the use of post-structuralist jargon is appropriate, in literary analyses it becomes more of an abuse, especially when repeated excessively. This is the case with the word "economy," which seems to proliferate ceaselessly in stilted compounds such as "economy of pedagogy," (139) "male economy," (157) "economy of desire," (193) to quote only a few examples. Of course, one cannot reduce the whole section to these regrettable occurrences, but it is equally true that they impair the fluency of the argument to a certain degree.

Hence, the sense of a gap that seems to come between the two parts of the book. Moreover, it seems that *La coscienza di Zeno*, of all the texts surveyed by Minghelli, is the only one closer in spirit to the Svevian fable of the man and the Mammoth. This is not to say, however, that the rest of Minghelli's interpretations are infelicitous, but to observe that only Svevo's last novel lends itself best to the type of reading proposed in the theoretical opening. It soon becomes clear that Minghelli's reading aims at identifying the coherent progression that runs through

Svevo's entire work, from its first rather sketchy emergence in *Una Vita* to its full-fledged materialization in *La coscienza di Zeno*, a development that may be summarized as man's constant search for symbiosis with the other. Perhaps Minghelli ought to have elaborated more on the sharp irony inherent in Zeno's fate, as he eventually chooses to step outside the shadow of the other at the end of a novel that seemingly stages the fable of man and the Mammoth in each of its eight chapters. It is nevertheless Minghelli's merit to have intuitively perceived the rich potential buried within Svevo's fable and to have extended its significance beyond a supposedly limited usage.

While the book makes a contribution to Svevo Studies, and, to be sure, will stimulate further debates within the Svevian community, its internal configuration is rather uneven. After a first part convincingly articulated, in which fruitful suggestions are played out with rigour and eloquence, the second part appears to be trapped in its own shadow.

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Leake, Elizabeth. *The Reinvention of Ignazio Silone*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003. Pp. 200. ISBN 0-8020-8767-1. US.\$ 50.

When the 'Silone Case' first broke in the Italian press in 1996, many people simply refused to believe the story. It was impossible that Ignazio Silone, one of the most celebrated anti-fascists of the 1930s, whose novels had educated a whole generation of people across the world about Mussolini's Italy, could have *spied* for the very regime he seemed to have opposed. As more and more evidence emerged about Silone's betrayal, it became harder and harder to go into denial about what had happened. Most people now accept that Silone had passed information to the police over a fairly extended period of time. Arguments remain over *why* and *for how long* the politician/writer had been a spy. The traditional defence of Silone – that he spied to save, or try and save, his brother Romolo from fascist imprisonment, have now been more or less debunked. Silone had probably been passing information to one specific member of the police authorities since 1919, and appeared to have done so right up to 1929. If anything, the arrest of his brother in 1928 on trumped up bombing charges led to the end of the spying, and not to its beginning. In fact, it seems, the saga of Romolo's arrest led Silone to *stop* informing, to take a moral decision, and to abandon the Italian Communist Party. Only a few 'heroic' supporters of Silone now try and claim that all the documents are either false or irrelevant.

Elizabeth Leake's interesting book is not aimed at a detailed discussion of the 'Silone case,' but it does take its lead from that case. Leake's aim is to revisit Silone's work (and life) in the light of this startling new information about the man himself. This is done through what Leake terms a "psychoanalytic approach to Silone's texts in light of the archival material the study presents" (10). To this end, Leake examines not only Silone's fiction, but also some of the extraordinary material



relating to his double life as a police spy. Much of this analysis is convincing and lucid, particularly the personal readings of the ways in which Silone passed through crisis and trauma towards his more successful fiction, as he made a break with the double life of spy/communist militant, but not with a life filled with secrets, guilt and deceit.

Leake maintains that Silone's fiction was for him a kind of catharsis whereby he exorcised some of the demons of the past through the written word. This kind of reading is then applied to a series of Silone novels, which are 're-read,' with some elegance, by Leake. What emerges is a complicated and multi-layered literary and political figure, who fits uneasily into the Gramscian tradition, which has sometimes been his supposedly natural home. As Leake puts it, "Silone's texts successfully conceal and reveal simultaneously" (146). Adriano Sofri has called the story of Silone "an Italian tragedy" and adds "one re-reads all of Silone, and one thinks: how could we not have seen it before." Leake's work helps us in this re-reading, whilst warning against the dangers of seeing everything—exclusively—through the filter of the 'Silone case.'

This is not to say that the book is without its problems. Above all, Leake seems rather confused in her placing of Silone within the Italian left. She underestimates the hatred towards Silone on the communist left—Silone was an arch anti-communist after the war and one of the organizers of the Congress of Cultural Freedom. So, when Leake calls Silone a "hero of the Italian left," she is making an error. Silone was a hero only to part of the Italian left, and not its hegemonic part (the Communist Party). Leake notes this hostility (41), but does not draw the conclusions she might from this information. Moreover, her reading of the 'Silone case' is almost inevitably hindered by the immediacy of events, and their fast-moving nature. Finally, Leake does not look at a number of key works in detail. The themes of *The Fox* (1934) published in Italy in 1958 and the play *And He Hides Himself* (1944) are spying and treachery. The historian Mimmo Franzinelli mentioned an unpublished work (held in the Silone archive) called *Il Dossier*, in which an anti-Fascist Minister of the Interior re-reads his own life through the police records of the Fascist period, as if Silone knew that one day he would be unmasked. We must await the promised new biography of Silone by one of the protagonists of the 'Silone case'—Dario Biocca—before drawing further conclusions about Silone's life and works. In the meantime, Leake's work helps us to understand the intricacies of this tormented literary figure.

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Torriglia, Anna Maria. *Broken Time, Fragmented Space. A Cultural Map for Postwar Italy*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002. Pp. 239. ISBN 0-8020-3604-X.

In questo libro Anna Maria Torriglia si prefigge il compito ambizioso di esaminare l'ambiente culturale italiano del secondo dopoguerra. La prospettiva offerta è originale in quanto alcune delle molteplici contraddizioni del periodo preso in esame



si spiegano, secondo l'autrice, anche attraverso l'analisi dei legami con un passato culturale e politico che molti intellettuali preferivano soffertamente non riconoscere. Fin dalla prefazione — forse un po' troppo densa di presupposti teorici che trovano poi uno sviluppo solo frammentato nei capitoli seguenti — Torriglia spiega come la frattura rigidamente imposta fra la cultura del *Ventennio* fascista e quella del dopoguerra sia in realtà una costruzione artificiosa dettata da una memoria volutamente fallace; una memoria che, ad esempio, si rifiuta di ravvisare nel Realismo degli anni '30 un antecedente del più famoso ed emotivamente intenso "Neorealismo" che avrebbe seguito la fine della guerra. Seguendo le coordinate di analisi del tempo e dello spazio (già presenti dal titolo) e scegliendo una prospettiva multipla che oltre ad un'analisi storica e sociale offre un'attenta lettura di romanzi e film (Torrighia segue il metodo, secondo la scuola semiotica, della "Textuality of culture") l'autrice cerca di capire lo sforzo operato dagli scrittori e intellettuali italiani del dopoguerra nel tentativo di ri-creare un'identità nazionale che trova nella cultura il suo tramite privilegiato. Non a caso, dunque, Torriglia elegge Homi Bhaba ad interlocutore prediletto per spiegare come il tempo "presente" non sia da interpretarsi esclusivamente in senso diacronico, cioè come successivo ad un passato da dimenticare; al contrario il presente è, secondo la definizione di Bhaba un luogo di "in betweeness", ovvero come sottolinea Torriglia: "a generative space that carves memories, feelings, and sensation out of both past and present while, at the same time, not coinciding with either" (XV).

Il libro si divide in quattro capitoli ben congegnati e che si integrano fra loro per offrire una visione complessiva del periodo preso in esame. Nel primo "Time has changed" l'autrice sviluppa le premesse che l'hanno portata all'analisi: il disagio nel confrontarsi col passato si esprime nel modo, intenso e contraddittorio, in cui si vive il presente. Torriglia prende in esame tre "testi", in senso multiculturale; in particolare: due film (*Gioventù perduta*, 1947, di Pietro Germi, e *Germania anno zero*, 1948, di Rossellini) e un romanzo: *Un eroe del nostro tempo* (1949) di Pratolini. L'attenta lettura, ricca di intuizioni, offre uno spettro multiplo e sfaccettato delle diverse prospettive e dei vari tentativi di creazione della "nuova identità italiana" che, necessariamente deve partire dalla distruzione della "vecchia" identità fascista. Nel film di Germi la "gioventù perduta" rappresentata da Stefano è quella che, cresciuta durante il fascismo, si ritrova poi spogliata di ogni valore e morale. Nel romanzo a tesi di Pratolini invece, "un eroe del nostro tempo" è il giovane Sandrino, vittima della degenerazione criminale causata dal fascismo. Sandrino rimane "fascista" anche dopo la caduta del regime, ma infine si salva rinnegando l'ideologia che l'aveva portato alla rovina. Infine in *Germania anno zero* l'ambiente che viene ricreato è quello del dopoguerra tedesco dove il giovane Edmund, a differenza di Stefano e Sandrino, diventa criminale in circostanze del tutto imprevedibili.

Il secondo capitolo offre una prospettiva sul dopoguerra "dalla parte di lei" e che si inserisce di taglio in una serie di studi letterari e femministi che hanno arricchito, negli ultimi anni, il panorama critico internazionale. La lettura risulta in parte penalizzata dal fatto che il pezzo non risulta del tutto nuovo al lettore; già pubblicato sia come articolo in una rivista letteraria sia come saggio nel bel libro

*Writing Beyond Fascism* a cura di C. Gallucci ed E. Nerremberg, il capitolo resta, tuttavia, uno dei momenti più felici del libro, dove l'autrice unisce ad una sempre attenta analisi testuale —che va da Anna Banti ad Alba de Cespedes, e che studia l'immagine della donna in Bellissima di Visconti— un'indagine critica informata ed acuta secondo le coordinate della filosofia di "Diotima" ed, in particolare, di Adriana Cavarero. "From Mother to Daughter" così è intitolato il capitolo, cerca di spiegare il fenomeno della nascita di una "genealogia femminile" dove il ruolo della maternità è da intendersi in senso completamente diverso da quello fino a quel momento implicito nella cultura fascista. La maternità è vista ora sì come momento importante nella vita della donna, ma non più in una prospettiva culturale di "annullamento" bensì di trasmissione di valori e qualità imprescindibilmente femminili. Non solo, in questa prospettiva la maternità assume una qualità nuova in cui, volendo, si può "essere madri" anche senza esserlo fisicamente bensì scegliendo di trasmettere la specifica soggettività femminile in un linguaggio teso a scontrarsi con un apparente "neutro universale" e che risulta invece legato univocamente alla cultura patriarcale. Questo è anche il capitolo ove le premesse teoriche, trovano una piena realizzazione nell'interpretazione dei testi.

Il terzo capitolo del libro: "The Myth of America" studia il rapporto tra Italia e Stati Uniti sempre secondo la coordinata del tempo e dello spazio. Gli Stati Uniti rappresentano infatti, nell'Italia del dopoguerra, il luogo in cui, in un certo senso, "il futuro" è già accaduto. Essi si costituiscono dunque come punto di riferimento nel difficile momento di transizione da un'Italia ancora agricola e conservatrice, e desiderosa di dimenticare il passato, ed un'Italia industrializzata, urbanizzata e socialmente "nuova" ancora tutta da inventare. Ancora una volta Torriglia dimostra in modo convincente come "the myth of America" non sia affatto un fenomeno peculiare del dopoguerra; esso trova bensì le sue radici più profonde in quel "fascist americanism" (80) che si costituiva come la diretta controparte del "fascist anti-americanism" (80) in un'ambivalenza tipica della cultura fascista. A questo proposito chiarificatrice risulta la citazione da parte dell'autrice di Emilio Gentile: "Americanism was, for fascist culture, one of the main mythical metaphors of modernity, which was perceived ambivalently, as a phenomenon both terrifying and fascinating" (80). Gli autori e i registi esaminati in questo capitolo sono, fra gli altri, Pavese, Vittorini, De Santis, Rossellini e De Sica.

Il quarto capitolo, infine, è dedicato al "viaggio" come fenomeno tipico del dopoguerra. L'intersezione delle due categorie di spazio e tempo si realizza pienamente nel motivo del viaggio, ma "The Country at Hand", questo il titolo del capitolo, è importante anche per altre ragioni. Il tema del viaggio è legato ad un altro tema importante: la rappresentazione del Sud. Torriglia esamina *Viaggio in Italia* di Rossellini e *Il mare non bagna Napoli* di Anna Maria Ortese. La lettura del *Mare* risulta interessante, in modo particolare, per le fini osservazioni linguistiche che fanno capire, dal di dentro, come Ortese riesca a conciliare, grazie appunto ad un uso del linguaggio che è peculiare a questa grande autrice del novecento italiano, la sua esperienza di giornalista con le sue qualità di "visionaria". Sarebbe stato interessante un breve accenno, a questo riguardo, ai rapporti difficili che Ortese intrattenne con i rappresentanti del neorealismo e alla polemica che seguì la pubblicazione del *Mare*. Nel 1953 infatti, anno della pubblicazione, questo libro,

“neorealista” per definizione e struttura interna, si pone già in diretta polemica con il celebre movimento. Torriglia spiega come la posizione di Ortese, nella letteratura italiana, sia una posizione di “solitudine”. Forse, l’autrice non ci dice nulla a riguardo, la causa di questa solitudine è attribuibile anche in questo caso —almeno all’inizio e almeno in parte— al desiderio, comune agli intellettuali del dopoguerra, di tagliare i ponti con figure importanti del passato (mi riferisco a Bontempelli) che risultavano innegabilmente vicine alla poetica di Ortese. Nel momento in cui Ortese non riesce e non vuole più aderire alle anguste direttive del movimento neorealista viene infatti, e a lungo, dimenticata.

Il libro, corredato da un’impeccabile bibliografia e riccamente documentato offre un’analisi attenta e criticamente acuta del periodo successivo alla seconda guerra mondiale e contribuisce in modo rilevante a riaprire la discussione intellettuale su uno dei periodi più affascinanti e controversi della cultura italiana.

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D’Angeli, Concetta. *Leggere Elsa Morante: Aracoeli, La storia, Il mondo salvato dai ragazzini*. Roma: Carocci, 2003. Pp. 142. ISBN 8-8430-2661-5. E.13,90

Concetta D’Angeli, studiosa da sempre della scrittura di Elsa Morante, ci regala questo prezioso libretto sulla seconda stagione dell’opera della scrittrice romana. Per seconda stagione, secondo la divisione teorizzata da Cesare Garboli, si intende il periodo a partire dalla metà degli anni ’60, coincidenti con la pubblicazione del *Mondo salvato dai ragazzini*. Se dichiara di condividere il parere del critico, D’Angeli in realtà pone giustamente vari limiti alla sua validità odierna. I limiti sono le qualità intrinseche della scrittura morantiana, e cioè il suo fondamentale dinamismo, la capacità di rinnovamento formale, la specifica modalità espressiva. Elementi che infatti limitano a mio avviso la validità attuale di questa divisione in due fasi per attestare invece un filo conduttore all’opera intera. Le tematiche e specificità espressive di Elsa Morante vanno ben al di là dell’iniziale anafora critica di Garboli, prima/dopo anni ’60. Sebbene il mutamento formale sia innegabile —anzi l’ibridazione di generi iniziato a metà degli anni ’60 dall’autrice ne è la conferma più evidente— sarebbe limitante continuare a vedere la sua opera ancora secondo tali parametri critici.

A conferma di un mutamento di posizione rispetto all’iniziale allineamento con il parere di Garboli (e anche di Giovanna Rosa direi) —forse inconscio, forse imposto dalla mia lettura— ma comunque presente nella sua conversazione pensosa e pure asciutta e godibilissima per la sua chiarezza, D’Angeli inizia la raccolta di saggi sull’ultimo periodo di Morante non da quello sul *Mondo*, ma da quello assai corposo (quasi una traccia per un altro libro ancora) su *Aracoeli*, quarto ed ultimo romanzo dell’autrice. Il libro si chiude poi con una bellissima e acuta analisi di “La serata a Colono,” uno dei pochissimi lavori critici sulla difficile parte conclusiva —ed opera teatrale— del *Mondo*. Un insieme diremmo cronologicamente *renversé*. Ma esistono dei motivi: il primo saggio, di grande respiro, risulta da

subito assai importante perché manifesta le coordinate metodologiche che poi fanno da legante alle varie parti del libro. D'Angeli vi analizza la struttura del romanzo attraverso il rapporto della scrittrice con Pier Paolo Pasolini, un riferimento costante e difficile — come ha chiaramente dimostrato Walter Siti in un precedente scritto — nella vita di Morante a partire dalla metà degli anni '50. Vi si studiano tra l'altro la composizione formale, la *fabula* e la struttura, l'uso della parodia — in effetti sempre presente nella narrativa morantiana — ma questa volta privata del senso comico — ed alcune figure e *topoi* come lo specchio, il doppio; il trattamento analogo del tema della morte e del sesso che facilitano e approfondiscono il parallelo fra i due artisti.

Il "tracciato pasoliniano" che la critica riscontra in *Aracoeli* lascia spazio anche a un'influenza proustiana da cui si attinge per costruire immagini specifiche all'opera morantiana, l'attivarsi tipicamente proustiano della memoria secondo sensazioni fisiche, ma da cui — dato assai rilevante nel rintracciare tale influenza — non è mai comunque assente il pericolo costante della politica intesa come potere, dei totalitarismi che seguono la cronologia di questo personaggio per metà pasoliniano e per metà autobiografico. In tal modo, mi sembra che D'Angeli riconosca come le tematiche da lei analizzate in questo romanzo giungano a dei paralleli e a delle soluzioni stilistiche simili a quelle di lavori precedenti a questo, dimostrando come esista una organicità di pensiero (la filosofa Morante) che opera da legante alla scrittura e che funga anzi quasi da suo stesso manifesto. Una scrittura, quindi, quella di Elsa Morante, da cui sono imprescindibili — come si è spesso notato — le ragioni etiche.

D'Angeli sembra invocare la filosofia per il pensiero morantiano. Romanziera e poetessa, certo, ma oltre a questi ruoli, esiste anche quello che necessariamente la scrittrice romana svolse per via di quella "vitalità sostanziale" che seppe infondere ai "procedimenti formali della letteratura" (15). In questo mondo in cui gli alienati e gli abietti diventano protagonisti assoluti e vittime del Potere, Morante molto più di altri artisti italiani analizzò il tema della vittima, di quegli "accanimenti del mondo [...] contro un unico bersaglio" scrive D'Angeli, che fosse questo Usepppe, Davide, non importa, perché i personaggi sono simboli di un'allegoria maggiore, di un mondo rovinato dai totalitarismi e dal sistema borghese, oltre che dalla esplosiva unione dei due.

L'ombra del pensiero di Simone Weil come del personaggio stesso (si menziona l'attività utilissima di Franco Fortini come suo traduttore italiano) avvolge invece il secondo saggio sulla pietà per gli umili e i diseredati davanti alla storia. Gli animali ed il protagonismo che Morante sceglie per loro, soprattutto nella Storia quali esseri innocenti, incapaci di discernere fra il bene ed il male, sono l'argomento di "Soltanto l'animale è veramente innocente." Tre sono le categorie in cui D'Angeli distingue la presenza degli animali nella Storia: quelli che fungono da personaggi autonomi dal mondo umano, Blitz, Bella, e Rossella. Bella, in particolar modo, diventa — sappiamo — una madre putativa per Usepppe, e parla la lingua degli umani. La seconda categoria è quella tradizionale, più rappresentata, del mondo animale, da cui si traggono spunti per costruire similitudini nella maniera manzoniana dei 'segugi' per i bravi di Don Rodrigo. Ma nel caso di



Morante, come giustamente commenta la critica, questa seconda categoria conosce una necessità affatto nuova, quella cioè di promuovere la terza prospettiva nel rapporto dialettico fra l'essere animale e quello umano che consiste in un'animalità intesa come metafora. Un avvicinarsi quindi ben più complesso dei due mondi rispetto a similitudini anche a volte scontate. L'assimilazione di Vilma al mondo animale, l'esempio scelto da D'Angeli, è senz'altro assai convincente, perché esiste in questo personaggio l'avvilente nozione di non essere riuscita a far capire la propria precognizione. In questo Vilma è l'antitesi di Ida, la cui mitezza si rivela inutile quanto il funesto vaticinio di Vilma. Due personaggi femminili destinati entrambi a restare inascoltati dal discorso ufficiale, dalla storia ufficiale, pur subendone le aspre conseguenze. Il più recente ecofemminismo non fa altro che ribadire concetti di oppressione che accomunano le donne agli animali, e in questo caso credo che si attagli alla perfezione agli oppressi di Morante.

Trovo molto bello e molto importante questo lavoro di Concetta D'Angeli. La studiosa vi opera un'analisi di tale serietà riguardo all'ultima stagione morantiana che in realtà le sue considerazioni e riflessioni (molto ben documentate e circostanziate da ricerche che rivelano ancora una volta l'importanza di attente letture di testi autografi, lettere, note della scrittrice stessa) servono per riconsiderare l'opera della scrittrice romana, che credo a tutt'oggi una delle esponenti più controverse e incomprese della letteratura italiana.

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Pellegrino, Anna Maria. *Diary of a Rapist*. Trans. Henry Veggian. Poughkeepsie, NY: Vivisphere Publishing, 2001. 149 pp. ISBN 1-892323-24-9 US.\$ 14.

Lo stupratore ci informa che non gli piace il buio. Il buio lo spaventa. Siamo tentati a credere che Luca, questo il nome dello stupratore, uno svogliato studente di biologia, raggiunatt di una tipografia e tifoso della Roma sia una persona normale. Con le sue ansie, le sue illusioni, le sue speranze, la sua solitudine. Come tutti. La notte quando finge di studiare per fare contenta la mamma, il nostro stupratore spia i movimenti di Magda che vive in un palazzo di fronte a lui. Ci immedesimiamo in una normalità tipica di una età post adolescenziale, dove l'indugio in un mondo infantile gioca ancora un ruolo fondamentale nel temuto passaggio verso la maturità. Niente di nuovo, di anormale, fino a quando Luca si appassiona ad un gioco spaventoso, iniziato quasi per caso. Luca sceglie una donna nel mucchio, la segue e la violenta.

Il pensiero di uno stupratore è come il cavalcavia di una città d'estate, non v'è limite di velocità nella città abbandonata. Il pensiero di una vittima è la carrozza di un treno che lo scambio conduce al binario morto. È l'abbandono dal mondo vivo, la fine della corsa e l'arrivo in un deserto, quello dello stupratore. In quel momento preciso, nello strappo dal mondo abitato, il deserto dello stupratore appare in tutta la sua nefandezza e crudeltà. È un luogo gelido dove gli elementi si sfogano sulla vittima.



Diario di uno stupratore è la cronaca meticolosa di un diario di viaggio, la folle corsa di Luca sul cavalcavia, il lucido dirottamento delle sue vittime su un binario morto e il lieto fine con tanto di fidanzamento e matrimonio. È un diario redatto dal protagonista, Luca, che nella sua descrizione dettaglia-ta delle tecniche di stupro, non ci racconta soltanto dell'architettura della violenza carnale ma anche della demolizione della vittima. La vittima diventa protagonista nei nostri pensieri, le sue reazioni, il suo dolore si fanno emblema della nostra condizione manichea e intercambiabile di vittima e carnefice. Sarebbe facile rispondere che noi siamo dalla parte dei deboli, delle vittime ma a chi assomigliamo veramente noi, in questa montagna russa di deliri e prepotenze, di paure e umiliazioni, chi siamo noi?

Anna Maria Pellegrino ci porta lungo le strade della presunta normalità, descrivendoci le avventure di uno stupratore, raccolte, esibite, collezionate in un diario: lui è il solito mammone, vive con la madre, odia la madre, mangia il suo cibo, dorme nel letto rifatto da lei. Studente sbadato e sfigato. Gli amici se la cavano meglio di lui o così lui crede. Perché lo lo stupratore crede tante cose, che le donne sono tutte troie, che non hanno cuore, che i ragazzi come lui le ragazze non se li filano perché non hanno la macchina sportiva e i soldi. Insomma fino a qui non ci sono tante differenze tra la vita di uno stupratore e quella di un giovane forse un po' sfigatello ma sostanzialmente normale.

Ma dietro al ragazzo da bar sport, che va sul balcone a scrutare il buio guatando la ragazza che rientra tardi la sera, c'è la mente del criminale, del predatore esperto, del furbo cacciatore. Spiare diventa un momento essenziale nella definizione della preda, della vittima. È un momento di rivalsa in un mondo dove nessuno ti guarda. È meglio essere gatto che topo. E lo stupratore non sbaglia mai, mira la sua vittima e colpisce. Lo stupratore è il cecchino che usa il pene al posto del fucile.

E lo stupratore si sente eroe da fumetto, la sua doppia vita è da fumetto. Nei fumetti i supereroi escono dall'anonimato per azioni impossibili e nessuno riesce a vederli in faccia, a scoprirne l'identità. La violenza dello stupro viene descritta meticolosamente, ogni particolare è coerente, come nei fumetti iperrealisti, vi è una grande mostra di organi e muscoli. Il sesso è sempre icastico, la Pellegrini non disdegna il grand guignol e la letteratura un po' pulp. Lo stupratore a cui ogni toccata e fuga va sempre bene, violenta e sparisce con una perizia ed astuzia uniche. Ed alla fine riesce anche a fidanzarsi e sposare la sua ultima vittima. Luca abbandona le sue confessioni sul diario che forse la sua preda un giorno leggerà con orrore. Lo stupratore ritorna (per sempre?) nell'anonimato, il costume e la maschera appesi al chiodo.

A che servono libri come questo? Ci avvicinano alla mente criminale dello stupratore, ci insegnano a non sottovalutare il linguaggio della normalità, a non credere nella normalità stessa. A rivoltare il concetto di normalità. Il mondo secondo la Pellegrino è diviso in due, da una parte gli uomini e dall'altra le donne. Non la pensiamo un po' tutti così? Sono molti che sostengono che gli uomini sono dei porci e le donne delle troie. E per la Pellegrino gli uomini sono carnefici e le donne sono vittime.

All'autore va riconosciuto il pregio di descriverci anche se monoliticamente come il maschio normale sia un violentatore in nuce, e forse questo è il risultato migliore dell'intero romanzo, discutibile ma stilisticamente efficace.

E se questo diario fosse tutto inventato? Se lo stupratore non fosse altro che uno studentello/scrittorello insonne che si diletta con volontà di potenza?

Un libro da leggere ma soprattutto da discutere.

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Lepschy, Giulio. *Mother Tongues and Other Reflections on the Italian Language*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002. Pp. 148. ISBN 0-8020-3729-1 US.\$29.95

In this book, Giulio Lepschy offers four distinctive sections on Italian linguistics, together with one specifically focused on the Venetian play *La Venetiana* and a remembrance of Carlo Dionisotti. Although the author's attention is drawn mostly to the Italian language, his reflections on Latin, Hebrew, and other languages are likely to make a wide range of readers appreciate his work.

The main topic tackled from the first chapter is that of the 'native speaker' of a language, which, as the author states, strictly relates to the concept of 'mother tongue'. Lepschy overviews the history of the two expressions and discusses the difficulties involved in their definition, especially when no living witness of a language is available to investigators. While considering the topic from the Italian perspective, the author comments on its peculiarity. Indeed, the co-existence of a standard language, regional dialects, and minority languages in the national territory poses some questions on how best to identify the Italian native speaker.

For a long time, the linguistic situation in Italy presented a diglossic division between the literary language, that is to say, the standard variety of Italian that was taught at school, and the dialects, that is, their mother tongues. Only by the 1970s had Italian gained the role of common language also in the oral form as contact with television allowed anyone an easy and daily access to the standard language.

Lepschy readily points out that, however common the language has become today, Italians' speech can still reveal regional features, or the speaker's level of education. Also, over the last few decades, standard Italian has changed under the influence of the various situations when communication takes place, and so has the individuals' attitude towards the language itself. As an example, Lepschy proposes the case of the subjunctive mood and the fact that it can often be seen replaced by the indicative. Although Italian and dialect speakers can interpret this as more or less grammatically correct, the preference for either mood does not hinder the success of people's interactions.

In the fourth chapter Lepschy presents an analysis of stress patterns in Italian. By means of examples, he argues that secondary stresses, opposed to those falling on the tonic syllables, can contribute to phonological distinctions between open and closed vowels, as well as to semantic meanings. Since these facts are shown to vary among speakers and regional realizations, the author can state that prosodic

features, too, lend themselves to multiple interpretations of today's Italian.

The linguistic aspects here briefly summed up are just some of the reasons for the variety of discussions on the actual identity of the Italian native speaker and the proper components of Italian as a mother tongue. Without limiting his view only to the Italian language situation, Lepschy attempts a solution to these questions.

He says, in particular, that the concept of 'acceptability' can help researchers distinguish native from non-native speakers. Native speakers must rely on some intuitive language knowledge to be able to accept certain structures and reject others. Because non-native speakers learn, rather than acquire a language, they lack such intuitive knowledge and consequently can misjudge unacceptable language as correct and possible. For example, Lepschy has noticed that in Italian border areas, where minority languages such as German or Slovenian are also spoken, users of Italian may not be aware of the ungrammaticality of certain phrases containing the indicative in place of the subjunctive mode.

However valid the concept of acceptability may be, Lepschy adds, one should not forget that many world famous writers choose to express themselves in a language other than their own. In so doing, they produce some beautiful and original literary works that would not otherwise be created. If this confirms the close link languages and literature establish between each other, Lepschy thinks that it does not make the definition of the native speaker any less complex a matter. When speaking of poetry, the author even claims that 'no one is a native speaker of the language of poetry' (27), meaning that the nature of poetry is independent of the language in which one writes.

In the last two sections of the book, Lepschy comments on the Renaissance play *La Venexiana* and on Carlo Dionisotti's life and works.

Lepschy is particularly fascinated by *La Venexiana* for two reasons: the role and the language of its female characters. The author agrees with the opinion that *La Venexiana* represents an innovative piece of work, where the female characters stop being 'passive objects' and become 'active sexual subjects' (113). Perhaps as a way to anticipate the next section dedicated to Dionisotti, Lepschy reminds us that the Italian scholar himself interpreted a few passages as suggestive of a 'female' touch rather than the expected 'male' one. In the author's view, this interpretation introduces further evidence of a message challenging some of the cultural and sexual conventions current at the time.

Besides praising Dionisotti's 'natural distinction' (123) and great number of publications, Lepschy values his approach to *La Venexiana*. While discussing the scholar's position within modern Italian culture, the author makes a remark that connects with his previous considerations in the book—he emphasizes Dionisotti's interest for a geographical perspective in Italian studies. This is most likely the way Lepschy shares with Dionisotti the idea that in Italy local characteristics and traditions need to be made the starting point for the analysis of any fact concerning the Italian language and literature, both of the present and of the past.

Antonio Bisaccia. *Punctum fluens. Comunicazione estetica e movimento tra cinema e arte nelle avanguardie storiche*. Roma: Meltemi Editore, 2002. Pp. 188.

Italian film scholars are not particularly known for their commitment to the work of avant-garde filmmakers, in spite of the foundational status, for European avant-gardes at least, of the manifestos of Futurist filmmaking produced in Italy early in the twentieth century. This may have to do with the relative paucity of avant-garde film experimentation in Italy—when compared with film traditions in other European countries, at least—as well as the lack of incentives, generally speaking, for scholarship in non-commercial areas of film production in Italy. Fortunately, the research of a handful of scholars in Italy is beginning to fill in gaps in scholarly accounts of Italian and European avant-garde filmmaking, elaborating upon the important preliminary investigations of only a few film historians working in Italy, including Verdone, Berretto, and Rondolino. Antonio Bisaccia's most recent book, *Punctum fluens: Comunicazione estetica e movimento tra cinema e arte nelle avanguardie storiche*, makes an significant contribution to aesthetic considerations and on-going debates in Italy concerning experimental filmmaking and the visual arts of the European avant-gardes since the early twentieth century.

The title of the Bisaccia's book, *Punctum fluens*, communicates very well the philosophical core of his approach to avant-garde filmmaking. That is, what anchors this extended meditation on experimental film is the paradoxical fact that the motion in motion pictures depends on a technological capacity to stop and fix motion on celluloid, and then, in projection, to produce an impression of movement, an illusion of motion, in the mind of the spectator. Besides twenty-four frames worth of celluloid run through a projector each second, there is nothing actually moving in the movies. To the extent that avant-garde experiments with film tended to be motivated by a desire to arrive at the essential characteristics and expressive capacities of the medium, for Bisaccia, the work of experimental filmmakers appears to remain essentially engaged with the paradoxical nature of film, which reproduces movement and "vitality" only by capturing and fixing motion and, by that same token, draining whatever is filmed of its "vitality." As many will recall, this draining of life on the silver screen, this problem of mediated life, allegorizes modern existence in Pirandello's *Quaderni di Serafino Gubbio operatore*, a novel about film that also inspired Walter Benjamin to write his influential essay on "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in which his meditations on the loss of "aura" in mass-art and in mass-life led him to consider the paradoxical nature of motion pictures as *emblematic* of the existential dilemmas of modernity. My sense, after reading this book, is that Bisaccia would not disagree—and he clearly signals his intellectual debts to Benjamin throughout the book.

However, at least as central to Bisaccia's book as Benjamin is Roland Barthes, from whom, in fact, Bisaccia derives his title, while endowing it with a mathematical connotation less important to Barthes. As he clarifies in the opening theoretical excursus of his book, Bisaccia draws upon Barthes' distinction (which he elaborated first in his study of Eisenstein's *Ivan the Terrible* and further developed in *La Chambre claire*) between the *studium* and the *punctum* of photographic images. For Barthes,



the *studium* of a photograph is whatever is of general "human interest" in the image, or whatever cultural information is being communicated. The *punctum* is an element that disturbs the *studium*, interrupts information, and represents an "infraction" of communication. The *punctum* is something that "stings" (*punge*), "wounds," or "stains" the image, and represents a challenge to comprehension:

Il *punctum* è davvero qualcosa che ci punge, attirando la nostra attenzione nell'area del particolare, nel corpo della percezione. Ed è da questo presupposto di fondo che si proverà a descrivere del cinema d'avanguardia solo ciò che ci ha punto, senza preoccupazioni sterilmente filologiche. (9)

As this statement makes clear, the provocative or even heretical power of the *punctum* in photography and film will also enable Bisaccia to break with the historicist and philological tradition that has largely constrained Italian film scholarship for decades. In its place, Bisaccia proposes an examination of the aesthetic dimension of experimental films, "a volo di colomba kantiana" (15). And while he's at it, he will couch his discussion in a style of prose that oscillates between academic commentary and description, on the one hand, and another voice that is clearly infected or irradiated by the aesthetic force of the films he discusses, on the other. This will result in a book that combines a synthetic survey of the European avant-gardes and the cinema (the book's *studium*) with moments of poetic departure and tangential meditation that at times verge on a sort of Kantian stream of consciousness (the book's *punctum*). This hybridization of Bisaccia's book, torn between the scientific "responsibility" of the scholar and the poetic "reverie" of spectator, leads the author to concentrate on the formal, alliterative and rhythmic aspects of his own writing, and this seems not only entirely acceptable, in a sort of Barthesian mode, but often most pleasurable. That is, the book is informative and theoretically coherent, but also often great fun to read:

Anche *A propos de Nice* (1930) di Jean Vigo, si può fregiare del riferimento al cinema puro con i suoi giochi d'artificio mirabolanti, le sue riprese dall'alto, le sue geometrie in movimento, i suoi uomini come statue mobili, presenze casuali, escrescenze terrestri della *ville*: queste marionette di carne abitano e proliferano in un territorio cementizio, dove tutto è forma che raccoglie forme, e ritmo che suscita quasi per eccesso di realtà. (56-57)

It seems to me that there is as much Manganelli here as there is Kant.

Preliminary to his survey of film and the visual arts, Bisaccia clarifies his preference for the term "experimental film" (*film sperimentale*) over the more commonly used term "avant-garde film" (*film d'avanguardia*). Drawing upon pronouncements on the matter by theorists and historians such as Brunius, Poggioli, Noguez, Costa, Verdone, Mitry, Weiss, and Jakobson, the author suggests that "experimental film" better communicates the attempt by film artists to create new forms of aesthetic elaboration, through films that give priority, as Jakobson would say, to the poetic function of the work: "Film sperimentale è allora quel film in cui il messaggio è in qualche modo autoriflessivo, richiamando l'attenzione sulla sua stessa struttura. Ovvero quando è costruito in maniera ambigua" (21).



Furthermore, Bisaccia resists the martial rhetoric of "avant-gardism" and insists, not without humour, that we might better refer to experimental films as films of "desertion":

Già in altra occasione abbiamo proposto di sostituire la vecchia metafora militare dell'avanguardia con un'altra (altrettanto conosciuta) metafora: quella della diserzione. Diserzione come violazione della legge della visione. (23)

Thus, experimental films are those in which transparent audio-visual communication and narrative legibility are absent without leave.

In the chapters that follow, Bisaccia charts a fascinating course through the films of "desertion" by "outlaw" filmmakers associated with the principle avant-garde movements of the European twentieth century, from Futurism to Impressionism, German Expressionism, Dadaism, and finally Surrealism. In a manner that is quite unusual in surveys of the filmic avant-gardes—especially those studies that would argue that avant-garde filmmakers were principally involved in "deconstructing" the classical narrative style—Bisaccia demonstrates the interaction between filmmakers and artists working in the other media, including music, painting, dance, poetry, photography. Indeed, the Futurists, he suggests, arrive at film through music. That is, it was after Corra and Ginna had experimented with the chromatic piano (whose twenty-eight keys were wired to twenty-eight coloured light bulbs) that they turned to film in order to make *Vita futurista* in 1916. Like Schönberg, these avant-garde musicians hoped that film might allow them the opportunity to visualize their compositions (35). In what will be news to many film scholars who knew only of Corra and Ginna's *Vita futurista*—which has at any rate been lost—Bisaccia describes the work of the Corradini brothers, in which they experimented with colour and rhythm, though always with an eye to expressing the chromatic effects and aesthetic excesses found in paintings, music, and poetry, by artists such as Segantini, Mendelssohn, Chopin, and Malarmé. The result of their efforts is a series of hand-painted abstract films bearing such titles as *Accordo di colore* and *Studio di effetti tra colori* that were made between 1911 and 1912, films that appear to anticipate later work in Italy by Luigi Veronesi (though the latter's work is not mentioned, since it falls outside the scope of Bisaccia's book). The attention to these other films by the Corradini brothers opens the way for an entirely new chapter in the history of Italian experimental film in the 1910s.

In the pages that follow, Bisaccia demonstrates the profound importance of Survae's materialist theory of colour and rhythm (found in *Le Rythme Coloré* and Survae's drawings for abstract films), perhaps indicating Survae's experiments as an under-appreciated current in abstract filmmaking—based on a sort of psychology of colour derived from his study of contemporary painting—that runs parallel to the "pure abstraction" or "absolute films" of Eggeling and Richter (whose work is also treated in this book). Thereafter, Bisaccia offers a panorama of the most significant film artists working in Europe before the arrival of sound, including the "first wave" (predominantly Impressionist) avant-gardists, such as Delluc, Epstein, L'Herbier, Gance, Dulac, who experiment with the "lyrosophic" autonomy of the new medium, divorced from the logic of commodity exchange.

He examines how Surrealist and Cubist filmmakers such as Clair, Picabia, Richter, Léger, and Soviet FEK artists Kozincev and Trauberg, carried out a type of anti-aesthetic, Formalist and "eccentric" film practice designed to release objects from sense by estranging them from usual contexts—allowing objects to "rebel" from meaning and attain a renovating autonomy. He suggests that Clair and Picabia, in *Entr'acte*, were influenced by the avant-garde chance operations of Appollinaire and Tzara. Delluc's "simplicity" is explained as the "sottrazione del cinema al dominio indiscreto della letteratura e del teatro, in modo da restituirlo al vigore visuale che gli è proprio .... Delluc sognava di un film dove non succedesse niente" (68-69). For Delluc and Riccioto Canudo, film deserves to be considered the 7th art because "può esprimere senza dire nulla" (71). He suggests that "L'Herbier cerca di teorizzare, visto l'inevitabile interconnessione tra cinema e industria, un sodalizio compromissorio in cui la mediazione della moneta non decreti l'estinzione dell'estetica" (80). Bisaccia plots Léger's course from the "mechanical period" in his painting to his decision to make films, arguing that "Léger trova nel cinema un alleato ideale per le sue sperimentazioni pittoriche" (106). He concludes his book with an account of how Dadaists and Surrealists—such as Clair, Picabia, Ray, Duchamp, Birot, and Buñuel—experimented with optical devices and distortion techniques, resulting in films that emulate the chronotope of dreams and challenge the cultural domestication of vision and thought. In so doing, "l'immagine non è più asservita alla relatività del rappresentare, alla gogna che soffoca la vitalità delle cose, alle concatenazioni del senso, e alla rassicurante 'imagerie' borghese" (147). In the process, Bisaccia makes clear how experimental films sought to act as energetic antidotes to cultural and intellectual anaesthesia: As Barthes would say, they were designed to sting.

Bisaccia has written an admirable and well-documented book that challenges standard historical approaches to avant-garde film, and he makes a strong argument that experimental filmmaking should not be seen merely as a response to the stylistic and narrative tyranny of Hollywood and the classical style associated with American fiction films. Rather, the work of the artists he describes is better served, his book suggests, by inserting it within the context of avant-garde experimentation and theorization in all the arts during the first thirty years that followed the birth of motion pictures. Elaborating a method of analysis beholden to Barthes' notion of the "third sense" of a work of art that does not offer the "spasm of the signified"—but also clearly influenced by a very thorough knowledge of experimental filmmaking from the silent period in Europe to the work of more contemporary work by artists such as Stan Brakhage and, especially, Michael Snow—Bisaccia has written an excellent book that will be useful to scholars and film aficionados alike. In the process, he has helped to fill the scholarly gap in aesthetic considerations of the historical avant-gardes in Italy and Europe, and does so in an intellectually and stylistically challenging manner, teetering "back and forth" between responsibility and reverie. Punctum.

PATRICK RUMBLE

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Celli, Carlo. *The Divine Comic. The Cinema of Roberto Benigni*. Lanham, Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, 2001. 175 pp.

To North American audiences, Roberto Benigni is most certainly best known for his film *La vita è bella* which earned him three Oscars in 1999, including Best Foreign Film and Best Actor. Celli's recent monographic study of the multifaceted actor/director's career provides the English-speaking cinéophile with a comprehensive look at Benigni's origins, family background and previous experience in theatre and film.

The preface pays homage to Benigni's international acclaim and success after the awarding of the three Academy Awards to *Life is Beautiful* but stresses Benigni as a steady presence in Italian popular culture since the mid-seventies. The aim of this book is clearly to introduce English-speaking audiences to Benigni's earlier film, stage and tv performances with an emphasis on the cultural and intellectual backdrops that characterize his films. This study offers an introduction to Benigni's readings of Dante and the Old Testament and traces the progression in Benigni's art and particularly his cinematic style as he "attempts a more ambitious use of the camera to filter reality into his own artistic vision" (p.x).

Celli provides an extensive, detailed biographical summary which explores the ancient Tuscan origins, the relationship Benigni-Dante and the influence on Benigni of Italian cinematic masters such as Cesare Zavattini and Pier Paolo Pasolini. Subsequent chapters deal with the genesis and development of the *Cioni* persona, the main character in Benigni's monologue *Cioni Mario di Gaspare fu Giulia* (1975), as Celli traces the evolution of this character from theatre to film justly noting the significance of the appearance of this 'decidedly leftist, obscene, country bumpkin' on the RAI state television as a "complete subversion of RAI's conservative policies" (p.33). With the *Cioni* persona, Benigni continued his challenge to intellectual hegemonies in Italy, "in this case the linguistic and cultural commonplaces of Italian state television" and "with his parody of RAI programming methods, Benigni continues the challenges to cultural elites that were first expressed in the Roman avant-garde theater" (p. 37).

A fifth chapter, 'Film Apprenticeships and Cameos, 1979-89', traces Benigni's collaboration and cinematic apprenticeship with Renzo Arbore, Marco Ferreri, Cesare Zavattini, Sergio Citti (and the Pasolinian school of filmmaking), Federico Fellini as well as U.S. independent film director Jim Jarmusch. This discussion effectively illustrates the attraction and influence of strategies of filmmaking that sought to 'counter the dominant cinematic culture with an alternative based in artistic forms that have at their heart a Gramscian search for nonbourgeois sources (Zavattini, Pasolini)' (p. 48) or 'lead the audience to question the commonplaces of commercial cinema (Jarmusch)' (p. 51) or yet 'criticize the dehumanizing confusion of the modern lifestyle (Fellini)' (p. 51).

A chapter entitled 'Benigni's Religious Parody on Stage' demonstrates how, in comic vein, Benigni incorporates into his parodies the influence of Schopenhauer: the theory of the world as an expression of the will, the inconsistencies in the biblical representation and expectations of God, the inconsistency in the Christian

dogma with regard to man's supremacy over animals and the incongruous concept of the Last Judgment and Celli attributes to Benigni's treatment of religion 'the carnival physicality of Rabelais, the scepticism of Schopenhauer and the cynicism of Pascal' (p. 60).

Benigni's growth as a director is mapped out in chapters VII through X: from the novice director of a first feature length film *Tu mi turbi* (1983) who 'uses the camera to emphasize his comic presence rather than as an instrument to alter or filter reality' (p. 67) to the more mature director of *Il mostro* (1994) 'where the camera becomes an interpreter of a social reality that complements his comedic body rather than merely records it' (p. 86), Celli traces the evolution to a higher level of cinematic sophistication which will appear in *La vita è bella*. These chapters examine also the various incarnations of Cioni-like characters in *Il piccolo diavolo* (1988), *Johnny Stecchino* (1991), *Il mostro* (1994) and even *La vita è bella* (1997).

A lengthy final chapter is dedicated, most fittingly, to *La vita è bella*, one of the most internationally successful non-English language films in cinema history, as Celli rightly notes—a triumph at Cannes and at the Academy Awards, but also object of much controversy 'over the delicate question of the suitability of using comedy to depict the Holocaust' (p. 97). In his discussion of this film, Celli highlights the fable-like construction of the film, the suspension of normality, the introduction of fantasy elements as well as the homage to Chaplin and the reliance on cinematic techniques reminiscent of the silent era and rightly places Benigni's film in a tradition of Italian cinema which re-examined Italy's Fascist past. To counter the prevalent criticism on the film's lack of historical realism and the viewers' inability to achieve a suspension of disbelief, Celli defends Benigni's conscious choice of an understated approach where 'horror is evoked rather than depicted' (p. 115).

Celli's monograph concludes with an Appendix consisting of two interviews with Benigni: the first, conducted by Celli, offers the reader Benigni's insight on questions regarding his improvisations, monologues and religious satires as well as Dante and 'high and low culture'; the second, conducted by Vanina Pezzetti, treats the question of Jewish identity, verisimilitude and the combination of tragedy and humour in *La vita è bella*.

This volume features also an extensive bibliography, complete filmography and list of Benigni's theatrical work which will render it an indispensable tool for any student or scholar of Benigni in particular or of contemporary Italian cinema in general. Its general readability and engaging style will fare well with proponents of 'high' and 'low' culture alike ...

RACHELE LONGO LAVORATO

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